

## TO THE READER

**K**INDLY use this book very carefully. If the book is disfigured or marked or written on while in your possession the book will have to be replaced by a new copy or paid for. In case the book be a volume of set of which single volumes are not available the price of the whole set will be realized.



Library

Class No. 820.9 <sup>R</sup>

Book No. M49 E

Acc. No. 1553 ✓

85

~~10/10/10~~





15.67

# ENGLISH LITERATURE

A NEW HISTORY AND SURVEY

FROM SAXON TIMES TO THE DEATH OF TENNYSON

Sp. 6

49 E

1553

PRATAP COLLEGE LIBRARY,  
SRINAGAR.

# ENGLISH LITERATURE

A NEW HISTORY AND SURVEY FROM  
SAXON TIMES TO THE DEATH OF TENNYSON

Com-05  
AL-8A  
C127.

BY

J. M. D. MEIKLEJOHN, M.A.

SECOND EDITION

LONDON

MEIKLEJOHN AND HOLDEN

11, PATERNOSTER SQUARE, E.C.

1908

320.9

1449 E

1553

PRINTED AND BOUND BY  
HAZELL, WATSON AND VINEY, LD.,  
LONDON AND AYLESBURY.

poem in our English literature is the poem called *Beowulf*. It was for centuries recited or sung to the harp by the scöps of the Northern peoples. Many critics consider it to have been composed in the peninsula we now call Jutland, and in that portion named Angeln (Schleswig), which is the oldest form of the word *England*. Recent criticism assigns its composition to the eighth century, the old Norse legends having been handed down and put into shape by a West-Saxon writer, in the language of whose country it is.

(i) The scene of the *Beowulf* is laid in Zealand—an island of Denmark. Hrothgar was the King of Zealand. He built a large hall, for the feasting of his thanes, and called it Heorot. This hall stood on the edge of a moor that was haunted by a terrible man-beast—called Grendel. This Grendel has the strength of thirty men; his nails are monstrous claws; and his head, when he is slain, has to be carried by four strong men. He lives with a grisly mother in a deep-sea cave, in a deep hollow among the rocks. At night, after the warriors have feasted and lain down to sleep, Grendel stalks through the mist over the moorland, smites the door in, falls upon the nearest sleeping warrior, and tears him to pieces. Suddenly Beowulf grips his right arm. The hall heaves and cracks with the struggle and the cries of the man-beast: Beowulf holds on, and at length rends the arm of Grendel from its socket. The monster flees to his sea-cave to die.

(ii) In the morning there is great joy in Heorot; there are games and horse-racing; scöps make songs, and there is revelry of every kind. The King and Queen come to look at the arm of Grendel; Beowulf receives noble gifts; and the tables are set for a new and splendid feast. After the feast, all lie down to sleep for the night. But the terrible mother of Grendel appears, snatches up the arm of her son, seizes a noble thane, and makes off into the darkness. She is a "death-spirit, a slayer of men, a creature of the mirk and mist, a sea-wolf, a sea-woman, a wolf of the sea-depths."

(iii) Beowulf vows to slay her. He crosses a moorland waste—a waste of rocks and crags, of stagnant pools and shaking bogs, of shaggy woods and the haunts of wolves. Then he comes to a ghastly lake, at the bottom of which lives the Mother of Grendel. Beowulf dons his shirt of mail, takes in his hand his faithful sword Hrunting, which his old friend Hunferth had made for him, and dives into the deep. From morn till noon he sinks, from noon till eve he goes on sinking. At length, just before his feet touch the bottom, the monster-Mother seizes him and carries him off to her den. His sword is powerless against her; and she flings him on the ground.

(iv) Looking round, he sees on the floor of the cave a mighty sword, "made by huge men of old, of powerful edge, a glory of warriors." He seizes the hilt, draws the sharp blade, strikes out fiercely, "till the hard weapon smote her neck, and broke the bone-rings."

(v) Hrothgar's thanes, who sit round the hall, say one to another, "We shall see him no more." But the thanes of Beowulf refuse to give up hope, and at last see their friend and leader rise from the mere, the golden hilt and the heads of Grendel and his mother in his hands. Four of them carry the gory head to Heorot, and fling it at the feet of Hrothgar. "Now," says Beowulf, "thy warriors and thou may sleep in peace to-night in Heorot." And they heap gifts upon Beowulf—horses and grey war-shirts and golden collars. Then Beowulf and his warriors hoist sail, and go over the sea to their own prince, King Hygelac, King of Gothland. And Hygelac gives Beowulf a sword inlaid with gold, gives him "power over seven thousand men," presents him with a palace and with the rank of a prince.

(vi) There are other stories in the poem, and Beowulf's last adventure is a fight with a dragon fifty feet long, whose breath poisons him. A huge pile is raised on Hrones-ness, a lofty sea-cape in West Gothland, over the remains, where his followers burn the body of their valiant lord.

(vii) "If we wish to feel that *Beowulf* is good poetry, we should place ourselves, as evening draws on, in the hall of the folk, when the benches are filled with warriors, merchants, and seamen, and the Chief sits in the high seat, and the fires flame down the midst, and the cup goes round—and hear the Shaper strike the harp to sing this heroic lay. Then, as he sings of the great fight with Grendel or the dragon, of the treasure-giving of the King, and of the well-known swords, of the sea-rovings and the sea-hunts and the brave death of men, to sailors who knew the storms, to the fierce rovers who fought and died with glee, to great chiefs who led their warriors, and to warriors who never left a shield, we feel how heroic the verse is, how passionate with national feeling, how full of noble pleasure. The poem is great in its own way; and the way is an English way."—STOFFORD BROOKE.

5. **The First English Epic** (ii).—The *Beowulf* is an unfinished epic; it is written in alliterative verse, and contains over three thousand lines. It was not committed to writing, as we have said, until the close of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century. It is said to contain only five similes; but it abounds in metaphors. Thus the sea is called the "whale-road" or the "water-street"; a king is a "ring-giver"; a ship is the "sea-bird," the "sea-horse," the "wave-farer," the "wave-steed." The story was brought to England from the mainland, and was probably sung in the North of England in the seventh century. From the North it passed to the South, and was clothed in West-Saxon English; and this is the form in which an early eleventh-century manuscript preserves the epic. The poem is not only the oldest epic in the English tongue, but also the oldest in the Germanic group of languages.

(i) There have been eight translations of it made into modern English. The last was in 1895 by William Morris, the author of *The Earthly Paradise*.

(ii) It has also been translated into Latin, Danish, German, French, and Italian.

(iii) There is only one manuscript in existence, and it lies in the Cottonian Library in the British Museum.

(iv) The name is said to be a contraction of Beadwulf = War-wolf.

6. **Caedmon** (637?—680).—The first English poet born and bred in England was a monk of Northumbria who flourished about the years 670 to 680. He was a "lay-brother," belonging to the monastery of Whitby, a monastery which had been founded and presided over by the Abbess Hilda, a lady of royal birth. He had never learned to sing or to compose; and when, at feasts, the harp was passed from hand to hand and each guest contributed to the enjoyment of the evening, Caedmon was obliged to refuse, and could not take his turn. One night he had slunk away from the feast into the cattle-stalls, lay down there to sleep, and in his sleep had a dream. In the dream the monk heard a voice, "Caedmon, sing me something." "But I cannot sing; it was for this cause I left the feast." "But you must sing to me!" "What must I sing, then?" "Sing the beginnings of created things!" And Caedmon then and there began a poem, in alliterative verse, in praise of his Mighty Creator and His eternal purpose: "Nú wé sceolon herion heofonrices Weard, Metodes mighte ond his móðgeþonc, wera Wuldorfaedar." (Now we shall praise the Warden of the heavenly kingdom, the might of the Creator and His purpose [mind-thought], of men the glorious Father.)

When he rose in the morning, he found himself in possession of the gift of song, recalled his dream and the verses he had composed in it, and was able to continue them. He was brought before the Abbess, who recognised his gift as a gift from heaven. Having been received into the Abbey as a brother, he spent much of his time in the preparation of manuscripts. He is said to have written paraphrases of the books of Genesis, Exodus, and of Daniel. It is doubtful, however, if the last two are his; and even the first has been much altered and added to—it has not reached us as it left Caedmon's own hands.



It is to Baeda ("the Venerable Bede," 673—735), a monk of Wearmouth and Jarrow, in Northumberland, that we owe our knowledge of Caedmon, the "first English poet" we know by name. Baeda was one of the most learned men of his time, and knew Greek and Hebrew, as well as Latin. He wrote in Latin, and his chief work is *Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (Ecclesiastical History of the English People).

7. **Cynewulf** (*circa* 720—800).—Cynewulf belonged to Northumbria. He was a scôp or bard; and some maintain that he was a priest. He wrote *Riddles*, *The Vision of the Cross*, *Elene*, and other poems.

(i) The *Riddles*, ninety-five in number, were written on common objects of the country—oxen and dogs, a leather bottle, an onion; or on nobler subjects, such as weapons of war, instruments of music, the ploughman, the moon, and so on.

(ii) *The Vision of the Cross* (otherwise *The Dream of the Holy Rood*) was written in his old age, and is a poetic account of his conversion to Christianity in his early youth.

(iii) The *Elene* tells us the story of the finding of the Cross by St. Helena (d. 328), the mother of Constantine the Great.

8. **King Alfred** (849—901).—Alfred the Great did much for the literature and for the education of his country. He was an able soldier, a great statesman and law-maker; a founder of schools, colleges, and monasteries; and he is also, not without some justice, regarded as the "Father of English Prose." His chief literary work consisted of translations, which he either made himself, or had made under his control and direction. In this way he gave to the English nation Orosius's *History of the World*, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, Boëthius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, and Pope Gregory's *Pastoral Rule*—a work brought over to England by Augustine in 597. Alfred sent a copy of his translation of the latter to every bishop's seat in his kingdom. [Aelfric (955—1020) was an English abbot, who earned the surname of "Grammaticus." He turned portions of the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, and the Book of Job into alliterative prose. He also wrote Homilies, Sermons, Lives of Saints, a Latin Grammar, and a conversation book; and he may be regarded as our first lexicographer, for his *Glossary* is indeed a Latin-English Dictionary. Wulfstan was a pupil of Aelfric's, and Archbishop of York from 1002 to 1023. He is the author of some Homilies and Sermons written in

English, and a patriotic *Appeal to the Angles*, urging them to cast off their vices and withstand the Danes.]

9. **The English Chronicle.**—But King Alfred's greatest service to the English nation was *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, as it is generally called. At Winchester and at Canterbury (the capitals of Wessex and Kent) dry and meagre records had been kept of the chief events of each year in our history. Alfred had them edited, revised, and extended backwards to the time of Hengist and Horsa. Then, about 891, he conceived the idea of making *The Chronicle* a truly national history. Much of the work he did with his own hand; and his style, though rude, is clear and vigorous. It was the beginning of the great volume of English historical prose. The following passage is an example:—

þá gegaderedon þá þe in Norþhymbrum biŕgeað ond on Éastenglum sum hund ſcipa, ond fóron súð ymbútan, ond sum fēowertig ſcipa norþ ymbútan ond ymbſæton án geweore on Defnascire be þære Norþſæ; ond þa þe súð ymbútan fóron ymbſæton Exancester. (Then those who dwell with the Northumbrians, and with the East Angles, gathered some hundred ships and went south about, and some forty ships north about, and besieged a work in Devonshire by the North Sea; and they that went south about besieged Exeter.)

(i) Alfred was born at Wantage, in Berkshire. He was the fifth and youngest son of Aethelwulf, King of the West Saxons. His mother's name was Osburga.

(ii) After the death of Alfred, *The Chronicle* was continued by various hands down to 1154—the date of Stephen's death. It is "the oldest Teutonic contemporary record."

(iii) The entries in *The Chronicle* between the years 894—897 are noble specimens of old English prose. Professor Earle says of them: "Compared with this passage, every other piece of prose throughout the whole range of extant Saxon literature must assume a secondary rank." And Dr. Sweet calls it "a perfect model of old English prose."

10. **Poems in the English Chronicle.**—In addition to the current account of contemporary events, there had, from time to time, been inscribed in *The Chronicle* a number of poems. Such are *The Battle of Brunanburh*, *The Battle of Maldon*, and *Elegy on the Death of Edgar*. The first of these describes the victory of Athelstan over the Danes in 937; it has been translated by Tennyson into modern English, and the pressure and force of the original may be easily guessed from his version:—

Bow'd the spoiler, bent the Scotsman,  
 Fell the shipcrews doom'd to the death.  
 All the field with blood of the fighters  
 Flow'd, from when first the great sun-star of morningtide,  
 Lamp of the Lord God Lord everlasting,  
 Glode over earth till the glorious creature  
 Sank to his setting. . . .  
 Never had huger slaughter of heroes  
 Slain by the sword-edge—such as old writers  
 Have writ of in histories—hapt in this isle, since  
 Up from the East hither Saxon and Angle from  
 Over the broad billow broke into Britain with  
 Haughty war-workers who harried the Welshman, when  
 Earls that were lured by the hunger of glory gat  
 Hold of the land.

This poem belongs to a class of war-songs for which England is famous: to such war-odes as Drayton's *Battle of Agincourt*, Campbell's *Battle of the Baltic*, Tennyson's *Charge of the Light Brigade*, and many others. *The Fight at Finnesburg* is an early fragment of a poem describing the massacre of Hnaef and his followers by Finn, King of the North Frisians. *The Song of the Battle of Maldon* tells how the Earl Byrhtnoth of Essex leads his men to the sea-shore to fight some Danish pirates who are just landing. The Danes are victorious; and the Earl falls. The poem is also called "The Death of Byrhtnoth."

## CHAPTER II.

---

### FROM THE NORMAN CONQUEST TO THE TIME OF CHAUCER.

1. **A Great Change.**—The coming of the Norman in 1066 was to bring into England and the English language many influences both for good and for evil. Among other results, the English language ceased to be employed in books; and our literature, both in prose and verse, was checked in its development. Norman-French, introduced into England by the Conquest, was, for many generations (in fact, for about three hundred years, from 1066 to 1362), the language of the governing classes, of the law-courts, of the higher officials in the Church, of the landowners, and of all military men.

2. **The Normans.**—The Normans, or Northmen or Norsemen, were a warlike, seafaring people, who had swarmed down from the shores of the great north-western mountain peninsula of Scandinavia, and had wrested from Charles the Simple the rich lands of the lower valley of the Seine—afterwards called Normandy, from their settlement there. Their Scandinavian predecessors, the Northmen of the previous century, had, in like manner, taken, in 878, the Danelaw, or Danelagh, in the East of England from King Alfred. The Normans in the Seine valley gradually learnt French from the native inhabitants, and it is easy to understand that, the Scandinavian conquerors having married French wives, the children would grow up with the language of their mothers, and the fathers would easily learn the new tongue from their own children. And so it happened that, when the

Normans invaded England in 1066, the language they brought over with them was a kind of French called Norman-French.

3. **The Two French Dialects.**—The French language was not always the same as we now find it. There were, in fact, from very early times, two languages, or two great dialects, spoken from the English Channel to the Mediterranean. The one was called the language of Oc, and the other the language of Oyl. Both were Latin languages, or, as such languages were generally called, Roman or Romance tongues. The line of division between the two was the River Loire, or more strictly, a line from La Rochelle to Grenoble—the language of Oyl being spoken to the north of that river, the language of Oc to the south. The language called Norman-French was a dialect of the language of Oyl; it differed in many respects from the more polished form of the Romance tongue which we now call French.

(i) Oc = Hoc, Latin for *this*; and it was used by the Southern French as their form of agreement—of saying *yes*. OYL = Illud, Latin for *that*; and it was also used by the Northern French as equivalent to *yes*. The *l* became a *u*; and hence the modern form of OYL is OUL. (Dante calls Italian “La lingua di *si*”—that is, the speech that employs *si* for *yes*.)

(ii) In the South the Oc remained as the equivalent of *yes*. The language called Provençal is the best known form of the *langue d’oc*. The name has been given to a southern province of France.

4. **The Effect of Norman-French on English.**—The effect of the introduction of Norman-French into this island was threefold: (i) it hastened the shedding of the old inflections; (ii) it introduced a large number of new words, and pushed out a number of Anglo-Saxon words; (iii) it completely altered the build of our sentences. As regards the first of these changes, it is worth noting that the dropping off, or slurring of inflections had begun in England long before the coming of the Normans. The English, never very careful about grammatical particulars—in fact, generally treating them with much indifference—began to let go their hold of grammatical inflections long before the eleventh century. When the Normans came, they soon began to perceive that the inflections of their words were of little use or value, and they clung to the word itself, or even only to its root. The second change was that, in the course of about three centuries—that is, from 1066



to 1362—several thousand Norman-French words were introduced into the English language. These words were of various kinds; but they chiefly related to matters of higher culture and refinement, to war, to land, to Church affairs, and to commerce. The third change was, though seemingly slight, of great importance. Before the introduction of Norman-French, the sentences were somewhat uncouth, clumsy, and unpleasant to the ear. They were like the modern sentences of the German language, the verb of each subordinate clause came at the end, and the mind was kept waiting for the sense, while the desire for rhythm remained quite unsatisfied. The coming of Norman-French made a change in all this, or at least proved the beginning of a new departure.

(i) The Old English words were cut down to the root, which was the accented part of the word. It was indeed the accent that preserved the word: the non-accented parts of the word easily fell away. This is plain in such words as *nase-thyrel*, which became *nostril*. Again, all the verbs ultimately lost their infinitive ending *en*; and it is for this reason that there are so many monosyllables in pure English.

(ii) The Normans introduced such Norman-French words as *palace*, *chamber*, *chair*, *cabinet* in furniture; *dress*, *costume*, *mail*, *armour* in clothing; *spouse*, *consort*, *cousin* in words relating to the family; *duke*, *marquis*, *count*, *viscount*, *peer*, *esquire* in titles; and *court*, *treaty*, *sovereign*, *cabinet*, *minister*, *empire*, *audience* in matters of state.

5. **The Disappearance of the Scōp.**—With the disuse of English among the people of rank and the complete ignorance of English on the part of the Norman nobles, the office and the singing of the Saxon *hord* or scōp gradually fell into "the portion of outworn weeds and faces." His place was taken by the Norman Trouvère, who recited or sang epic or narrative poems—"chansons de geste" (songs about deeds) or "fabliaux" (fables), or such long poems as the *Roman de la Rose*, *Reynard the Fox*, and others. The Provençal Troubadour, who sang short lyrics or amatory poems, though known in England after the accession of Henry II., never became settled in this country, and hence has had little or no influence on the literature of the time. Court and castle long maintained and encouraged the Trouvère and the Jongleur.

(i) The Trouvères were also called *ministrels* (Lat. *ministrellus*, a little servant); hence our word *minstrel*. "In the Middle Ages, the minstrels were a class who devoted themselves to the amusement of the great in castle or camp by singing ballads or songs of love and war, sometimes of

their own composition, with accompaniment on the harp, lute, or other instrument, together with suitable mimicry and action,—and also by story-telling."

(ii) One class of minstrels were called *Jongleurs* (Jugglers). They united with the recital or singing of ballads acrobatic performances and tricks by sleight of hand.

(iii) *The Romaunt of the Rose* was an early French poem, begun by Guillaume de Lorris before 1260, and continued forty or fifty years later by a writer called Jean de Meung (1250—1305). It is a long allegory (about 22,000 lines) on the subject of love (see p. 21).

(iv) *Reynard the Fox* is the title of a long satirical epic poem, composed about the middle of the thirteenth century, which delighted many generations in the Middle Ages. The proper name of the Fox—Reynard—became in French the common name for that animal. It is one of the ordinary beast-epics of the period, in which the poet satirises men and things, and inveighs against the vices of the age. Many poets have told the story—in Flemish, in Low German, and in High German. Goethe, in 1793, wrote a freely paraphrased version of the Low German poem—*Reinecke Fuchs*—in very pleasant hexameters.

6. **Geoffrey of Monmouth** (1100—1154).—It is to a Welsh priest at the court of Henry I. that English literature owes its introduction to a storehouse of romance richer than had ever been before discovered. He wrote, but in Latin, twelve little books (1132—1135), which he called *The History of the Britons* (*Historia Britonum*). The appearance of this book, "a bright spring of romance," marks an epoch in the literary history of Europe. Poets, story-tellers, historians, regarded it as a rich mine of unexplored fact and fable; and in less than fifty years the story of Arthur and the Round Table gave birth to romances in Germany and Italy, as well as in France and England. Two Normans, Geoffrey Gaimar and Robert Wace, turned parts of it into French verse; and the English writers Layamon and Robert of Gloucester translated Wace into the English of the time. Wace called his poem the *Geste des Britons* (Deeds of the Britons), and afterwards the *Brut d'Angleterre*. It was completed in 1155, soon after the accession of the Angevin King Henry II. Geoffrey's storehouse of legends, fables, and romances was drawn upon for centuries after it appeared; and the last poet who laid it under contribution was Tennyson, who found in it all the narrative for his *Idylls of the King*. Indeed, it is to Geoffrey that we owe the chivalric character of King Arthur and his Knights of the

Round Table. History it is not—but, in another and truer sense, it is a wonderful history of human nature.

(i) BRUT (or Brutus) was the name of a legendary chief, who was said to be the grandson of Ascanius, and the great-grandson of Aeneas, and who, after the fall of Troy, became King of Great Britain. There was, among all the older historians of the Middle Ages, a permanent desire to connect all history with Troy and the Trojans.

(ii) Sir Thomas Malory, about 1470, collected all the prose romances connected with King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, and published them under the title of *Morte d'Arthur*. They were printed by William Caxton in 1485.

7. **Lazamon, or Layamon** (fl. 1200).—The first English writings after the Conquest are those of Layamon, a priest (a “reading clerk”—*clerc lisant*) of Ernley-by-Severn—now called Arley-Regis, or King’s Arley—in Worcestershire. He stands in the same relation to post-Conquest English as Caedmon does to pre-Conquest literature. The title of Layamon’s amplified translation of Wace is the *Brut; or, Chronicle of Britain*. It is written in “Semi-Saxon,” or, more correctly, “Transition English.” The verse is alliterative, with now and then a slip into rime. Wace’s *Brut* contains 15,300 lines; Layamon’s, 32,250. The poem was probably completed about the year 1205, the sixth year of the reign of King John. But Layamon made many additions to the version of Wace—among others, the story of King Arthur’s being carried after death to Avalon—or, as Tennyson calls it, “the island-valley of Avilion”—

Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,  
Nor ever wind blows loudly, but it lies  
Deep-meadow’d, happy, fair with orchard-lawns  
And bowery hollows crown’d with summer sea.

The following is a specimen, in the short lines of the original:—

And ich wulle varan to Avalune;  
To vairest alre maidene.  
To Argante pere quene:  
Alven swithe sceone.  
And heo scal mine wunden  
Makien alle isunde,  
Al hal me makien  
Mid haleweige drenchen.

(And I will fare to Avalon—to the fairest of all maids. To



Argante the Queen, an elf very beautiful. And she shall my wounds make all sound, make me all hale, with healing draughts.)

(i) *Varan* is the infinitive. *Alre maidene* is the genitive plural. *Sceone*=German *schön* and English *shcen*. *Isunde*, a broken-down form of *gesund*. *Hal*=hale (the later spelling, *whole*, has the *w* superfluous). *Mid* is the O.E. word for *with*; cf. the German *mit*.

(ii) The *ȝ* in *Laȝamon* was a hard *g*, which was in course of time refined into a *y*. It was also changed into a *w*, and is found thus in the other spelling of the writer's name, "Laweman."

(iii) The poem begins thus: "There was a priest in the land—Who was named Layamon—He was son of Leovveneth—May the Lord be gracious to him!—He dwelt at Ernley—At a noble church—Upon Severn's bank—Good it seemed to him—Near Radstone—Where he read book" (read the lessons in church).

(iv) There are two MSS. of Layamon's *Brut* in existence—both in the British Museum.

(v) According to Sir F. Madden, there are not fifty French words in the earliest version of the whole poem.

8. **Orm, or Ormin.**—Another English writer appeared in the latter end of the reign of King John. His name was Ormin, and he seems to have been born in Lincolnshire; he was a canon of the order of St. Augustine. His book consisted of metrical paraphrases of the Gospel of each day, along with homilies—also in verse. The purpose of the book was to bring home, in simple language, to "the business and bosoms" of the common people, the Scripture truths contained in the daily offices of the Church. He called his book the *Ormulum*, after his own name. The most striking peculiarity of the book is its spelling; which he, no doubt, invented for the purpose of keeping Norman priests quite straight and accurate in the pronunciation of English. This peculiarity consists in his doubling the consonant after each short vowel, and nowhere else:—

ƿiss boc iss nemmed Ormulum  
Forr ƿi ƿatt Orm itt wrohhte.

And he goes on, in the dedication:—

Icc hafe wendd intill Eungliſsh  
goddspelless hallȝhe lare,  
Afterr ȝatt litte witt ȝatt me  
min Drihhtin hafeȝȝ lenedd.

(I have wended [= turned] into English the holy lore of the Gospel, after the little wit that to me my Lord [Drihhtin] has lent.)

His verse is without alliteration and without rime. His long line has a pause in the middle, between the eight syllables of the first half and the seven syllables of the last; but the long line is usually printed as two. The book is written in the simplest English; the vocabulary is very pure, and has few Latin or French words:—

& Sannte Mar3e comme till himm  
 & se33de himm þuss wiþþ worde  
 Whi didesst tu, lef sune, þuss  
 Wiþþ uss, for uss to swennkenn?  
 Witt hafenn sohht te widewhar  
 Icc & ti faderr baþe  
 Wiþþ serrhfull herrte & sari3 mod.  
 Whi didesst tu þiss dede?  
 & tanne se33de Jesu Crist  
 Till baþe þuss wiþþ worde  
 What wass 3uw swa to sekenn me,  
 What was 3uw swa to serr3henn?

Ne wisse 3e nohht tatt me birrþ

Min faderr wille forþenn?

And Saint Mary came to him  
 and said [to] him thus with word,  
 Why didst thou, dear son, thus  
 with us, for us to trouble?  
 We two have sought thee wide where  
 I and thy father both  
 With sorrowful heart and sorry mood.  
 Why didst thou this deed?  
 And then said Jesus Christ,  
 to both thus with word,  
 What was [there to] you so to seek me,  
 what was [there to] you so to  
 sorrow?  
 Not wist ye not that me becomes  
 [birrþ, or is due]  
 my father's will [to] do?

(i) Normandy had been wrested (by Philip Augustus of France) from King John in the year 1204. This year then marks the transition period when, the Anglo-Norman nobles having lost their possessions in France, and being now forced to reside permanently in England, an amalgamation of the two languages began to take place, and to continue at an ever-increasing rate. Hence, many Anglo-Norman priests would read the Church lessons in English, and would hardly know how to pronounce many of the words.

(ii) "When the consonant was single, even a Norman or town-bred priest reading the simple English homily to the simple country congregation was thereby taught that the preceding vowel was a long vowel, and he was accordingly warned not to mispronounce it."—HENRY MORLEY.

(iii) "Without sacrifice of the dignity of the subject, each Scripture story is told in the easy language that might be addressed to an untaught peasant."  
 —*Idem.*

9. **The Ancren Riwe** (1210).—This book, *The Rule of Nuns*, is a specimen of thirteenth-century English prose. It is a kind of guide to convent life—a set of rules for a number of anchoresses (nuns), who resided at Tarrant-Kingston, on the Stour, in Dorsetshire, and who afterwards joined the Cistercian order. *The Rule* is written in Transition English—probably by Richard Poor, of Tarrant-Kingston, who became Bishop of Durham, and died in

1237. The ladies belonging to this society are not to beat themselves with leaded whips, not to inflict on themselves too many strokes, nor to draw blood from themselves with twigs of holly. They are told, if asked to what order they belonged, to "say that ye are of the order of St. James." And the doctrine of St. James is contained in these words: "Pure religion and undefiled is to visit the widow and the orphan, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

The following is a specimen of the Dorsetshire English:—

3e, minë leouë sustren, voleweþ ure lefdi, and nout þe kakelë Evë. Vor-þi ancre, hwat-se heo beo, also muchel ase heo ever con and mei, holdë hire stille; nabbe heo nout hennë kundë. þe hen, hwon heo haveþ ileid, ne con butan kakelen. (Ye, my dear sisters, follow our Lady, and not the cackling Eve. Therefore let the anchoress, whoever she be, hold herself still as much as she ever can and may: let her not have the kind [nature] of the hen. The hen, when she has laid, cannot but cackle.)

*Voleweþ*, the imperative; *þi* is the ablative of *þe* (the). *Also* = *as*. *Heo* is still used in Lancashire in the form of *hoo* (she). *Nabbe* = *ne habbe* (have not).

10. **William Langland** (1332—1400).—This English poet, according to Bishop Bale, was born about the year 1332 at Cleobury Mortimer, in the county of Shropshire, not far from the borders of Wales. Traditions of Langland exist, more or less doubtful; but what we really know of his life and his appearance has been gathered from his own writings, and from them only. No contemporary author has even mentioned him. He belonged to the farmer class—"ycome of franklins and free men"; and his whole life seems to have been spent at two places—Malvern and London. A priory and a school formerly existed at Malvern; and it is probable that he was a scholar at that school. He was an eager learner, but not a steady student ("lef to learn—but loth for to studie"); his desire was to know "all the sciences under the sun, and all the sotyle (subtle) craftes." He was a kind of secular priest; his chief, and perhaps his only, mode of earning a livelihood was by singing masses for the repose of the souls of the dead; in other words, he held a "chantry." In his poems Langland has depicted himself as a tall gaunt figure, dressed in a long black gown, with large folds, striding along the Strand or Cheapside with so strange and absent an air that people

say "he is mad." He lived—miserably enough—in a small house on Cornhill, with his wife Catherine and his daughter Nicolette. In 1399, the year before his death, he is considered to have written his last poem, *Richard the Redeless*.

(i) A *secular* priest was a priest who lived in the world, not in the cloister. The term was generally applied to parish priests, who did not belong to any monastic order, and were not bound by monastic vows or rules. Parish priests were thus non-monastic clergy, as distinguished from the monastic or *regular* clergy.

(ii) A chantry (*cantaria*) was a chapel in a cathedral, or a small church, set apart for the singing of masses or services for the dead. There were seventy-three in Old St. Paul's alone. Compare the lines—

And I have built  
Two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests  
Sing still for Richard's soul.

—*Henry V.*, Act IV. sc. i. l. 317.

(iii) Chaucer says of his parish priest that he kept to his parish and never Ran to London, unto seynt Poules  
To seken him a chaunterie for soules.

**11. His Poems.**—The proper title of his chief poem is *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman*. Then follows another poem called *The Vision of the Same concerning Do Wel, Do Bet, and Do Best*. Both poems are related as dreams, the usual form in which poems were cast in that time. The poet falls asleep on the Malvern Hills, on a fine morning in May, and has a "merveilous sweuene" (a wonderful dream):—

In a somer season \* when soft was the sonne,  
I shope me in shroudes \* as I a shepe were,  
In habite as an heremite \* unholy of workes,  
Went wyde in this world \* wondres to here.

(I put myself into shrouds—clothes—as if I were a shepherd, in dress like a hermit—not one who keeps his cell, but who goes about in search of adventure.)

His poem, as is plain, is written in alliterative verse, and in Transition English.

(i) Piers, in his dream or vision, sees a fair field full of folk. A Lady Meed (Reward or Bribery) is about to be married to Falsehood; but Theology intervenes and forbids the marriage. The case is referred to the King in London. Many other scenes in London and in the country follow; and the whole poem is an allegorical vision—somewhat like *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

(ii) The poem called *Do Wel, Do Bet, and Do Best*, consists of another series of dreams with an elaborate allegory.



(iii) The vision contains brief views of London life and manners—the everyday life of the people of the city, their dress, their food, their wages, and so on. He mentions Cornhill (of course), East Cheap, Shoreditch, Stratford, Tyburn, Southwark, etc.

**12. Langland's Language.**—Dr. Skeat says that “the Prologue to *Piers the Plowman* and the first 420 lines of Chaucer's Prologue alike contain 88 per cent. of Anglo-Saxon words. . . . The number of French words in our author is considerable.” The fact is that before the end of the fourteenth century the English language had become saturated with French words; and neither Chaucer nor Langland, nor any other writer, could avoid the use of them, if he wished to express himself truly and adequately. The dialect in which he writes is not pure East Midland, like Chaucer's, but a mixture of Midland and of South.

(i) The sign of the plural in East Midland is *en*; in the South it is *eth*.

(ii) Langland makes his genitive singular end in *es*. His plural adjectives end in *e*. The comparative of *heigh* (high) is *herre*; the superlative *hexte* (= heigheste). Both *sche* and *hee* (Lancashire *hoo*) are used for the feminine pronoun. The contractions *nam* (= ne am), *nelle* (= ne will), are used, as in Chaucer.

(iii) In alliterative verse there must be at least three alliterative letters (or “rime-letters”), two in the first half, and one in the second half. “The two former are called *sub-letters*, the latter the *chief-letter*.” The accent must strike the alliterative syllable; and there must be at least three accented words.

(iv) Langland seems to have written his poem at least three times. The first version (A Text) appeared in 1362-3; the second (B Text) in 1376-7; the third (C Text) between 1393 and 1398-9—the year before his death. It was very frequently copied, and eagerly read. There are at present forty-five MS. copies in existence. The writing of his poems seems, with all its alliterations, additions, and emendations, to have taken him about thirty-five years.

**13. Historic Period.**—Langland lived through an eventful and troubled period of English history—through political, social, and religious storms, through wars and battles, through plagues and storms of wind. He saw the Treaty of Brétigny when Chaucer, then about twenty, who had been taken prisoner, was ransomed by aid of Edward III.; he saw another war with France; he saw the “Good Parliament” of 1376; he saw the defeat and deposition of Richard II., whom he calls “Richard the Redeless”<sup>1</sup>; he lived through the longer half of the Hundred Years' War. He

The word *Redeless* means without “rede” or good council.

lived a full life—always in complete sympathy with England and Englishmen.

14. **Langland's Religion.**—Opinions differ as to how far the poet sympathised with Wyclif. He whips abuses in ecclesiastical matters with a free hand, and on that account his book was a great favourite with the reformers and Puritans of a later period. He maintains, however, the necessity of obedience to papal authority, and although the monks may give occasion for satire, yet the cloister affords opportunity for leading the higher life. Relegated by marriage to an inferior position in the Church, in which he could not rise by preferment, he suffered from a sense of his own superiority to his more prosperous brethren, and keenly felt the poverty to which he was committed in the married state.

15. **John Barbour** (1316?—1396), Archdeacon of Aberdeen and one of the most interesting figures of this period, was a contemporary of Chaucer. He held several important offices and was a favourite at the Scottish Court. His claims to literary distinction lie in *The Bruce*, a poem of 14,000 octosyllabic lines. Though not of high poetic value, and romantic rather than historical, it is yet a fine example of Lowland English. Barbour manages in his work to create and maintain a love and admiration for his hero; while his descriptive scenes and his fervid patriotism failed not through the succeeding centuries to appeal to Scotsmen. The following passage is from the account of the death of Bohun, at the hands of Bruce:—

Than sprent thai sammyn<sup>1</sup> in-till a lyng;<sup>2</sup>  
Schir Henry myssit the nobil kyng;  
And he, that in his sterapis stude,  
With ax that wes bath hard and gude  
With so gret mayn roucht<sup>3</sup> hym ane dynt,<sup>4</sup>  
That nouthir hat no helme mycht stynt<sup>5</sup>  
The hevy dusche<sup>6</sup> that he him gaf,  
That he the hed till haruys claf.<sup>7</sup>  
The hand-ax schaft ruschit in twa,  
And he doune till the erd can ga.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> sprang together.

<sup>2</sup> on a line.

<sup>3</sup> reached.

<sup>4</sup> stroke.

<sup>5</sup> stop.

<sup>6</sup> blow.

<sup>7</sup> clave.

<sup>8</sup> fell to the earth.

## CHAPTER III.

### CHAUCER AND HIS AGE.

1. **Sketch of his Career.**—Chaucer belonged to a family that had resided in London for at least several generations. His father and grandfather were vintners and men of substance. The poet was born in London not earlier than 1330, and not later than 1340, the evidence pointing to the latter date rather than to the former. He was a member of the retinue of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, and he probably married the Philippa who was an attendant of the Duke's wife, Elizabeth, Countess of Ulster. In 1359 Chaucer went with Clarence, after the two years' truce, on Edward's great expedition to France, of which Froissart tells us "there was not knight, squire, or man of honour, from the age of twenty to sixty years, that did not go." Chaucer was taken prisoner, but was ransomed after a short time, the King contributing £16<sup>1</sup> towards his release. The Treaty of Brétigny brought peace, and Chaucer, soon after his return to England, became a member of the King's household. He and his wife received several pensions, and Chaucer rose in the service of the court, and was employed on many diplomatic missions. In 1373 he visited Italy, which had an important influence on his literary career. A year later he was appointed comptroller of the customs of wool, skins, and tanned hides in the port of London, and his income from various sources was very considerable. During these early and prosperous years he wrote minor verse, ballades, roundels, etc., a few of which have

<sup>1</sup> The purchasing power of £16 in the fourteenth century was about the same as £300 at the present time.

been preserved. The great body of his work, however, was produced during the reign of Richard II.

In 1378 Chaucer was sent on another diplomatic mission to Italy, some particulars of which are given in the State Papers. In 1386 he represented the county of Kent in Parliament, in which strong proceedings were taken against Chaucer's patron, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and the poet suffered from the resentment of the Gloucester party. He was deprived of his public appointments, and his wife soon afterwards died. He addressed himself, however, to his poetical work, and in the leisure the loss of office afforded him, the next two years were the most prolific in his literary career. In 1389 the young King took the government into his own hands, and Chaucer was restored to his former offices. He was appointed clerk of the King's works at Westminster, the Tower, and his numerous manors. He was deprived of his offices again in 1391, and in the subsequent years he suffered a good deal from poverty and debt, and seems to have been in constant want of means. He was rendered free of care in the last year of his life by the accession of Henry IV., who promptly replied to his "Complaint to his Empty Purse," a copy of which he sent to the King. The last lines run:—

O conqueror of Brutes Albion!<sup>1</sup>  
Which that by lyne and eleccioun  
Ben verray King, this song to you I sende;  
And ye, that mowen<sup>2</sup> all harm amende,  
Have minde up-on my supplicacioun!

Chaucer died in 1400, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

2. **Chaucer's Early Poems.**—In recent years the works of Chaucer have been subjected to the closest criticism, and poems previously attributed to him have been rejected. Passing over the names of some minor pieces, the first important work of Chaucer was his translation of *The Romaunt of the Rose*, the great poem of the Middle Ages already referred to. In all his early work Chaucer was under French influence, the effect of which is especially seen in the ease and grace so characteristic of his verse. The only ms. of his translation is in the Hunterian Museum,

<sup>1</sup> The Albion of Brutus, the traditional first King of England.

<sup>2</sup> may.



Glasgow. The original work of two French poets, Lorris and de Meung, is of great length, extending to over 22,000 lines. The translation, less than a third of the French poem, is divided into three parts: the first (ll. 1 to 1705) is generally admitted to be Chaucer's; his supposed authorship of the second (to l. 5810) is generally rejected; and the third, consisting of over 1,800 lines, in the opinion of Dr. Skeat, is not "glaringly unlike Chaucer's work." The poem is, as usual, cast in the form of a dream. A lover comes upon a garden—

Ful long and brood, and everydel  
Enclos it was, and walled wel,  
With hye walles embatailled,  
Portrayed without, and wel entailed  
With many riche portraitures.

Entering, he is met by many allegorical personages, and coming to the well of Narcissus, he sees in the crystal stones at the bottom a view of the garden and a beautiful rose-tree. Among its flowers was one

So fair, that of the remenaunt noon  
Ne preyse I half so wel as it.

Love pierces him at once with five arrows, and then follows the long pursuit for the possession of the rose.

*The Boke of the Duchesse* was written in 1369, on the death of Blanche of Lancaster, wife of John of Gaunt. It is strongly characteristic of his early period, and shows his indebtedness to the French poets. In his earlier works Chaucer followed the conventional manners of the age, and the rules which governed the prevailing taste in the personification of abstract ideas. He shows but little humour in the poems of this period, for this great quality, so characteristic of much of his later work, developed with his years, extended observation, and ripe experience of public life.

3. **Poems of his Middle Life.**—Chaucer's second Italian mission had a marked influence on his work as a poet. He had learned Italian, and now made acquaintance with the writings of Dante<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dante Alighieri was born at Florence 1265; died at Ravenna 1321. In his ninth year he first saw Beatrice Portinari, then eight years of age, who inspired him with that romantic passion narrated by him in the *Vita Nuova*. Like Sidney, Dante married another than the subject of his love poems. Beatrice became the wife of Simone de' Bardì, and died at the age of twenty-four.

and Boccaccio.<sup>1</sup> From the latter's *Filostrato*<sup>2</sup> he wrote his splendid narrative poem *Troilus and Criseyde*. It is over 8,000 lines in length, but Chaucer is indebted to the great Italian storyteller for only about one-third of the poem. In Chaucer's hands Criseyde is entirely attractive, and the character of Pandarus, her uncle, is also changed, and he becomes a singularly striking and bold creation. The poem consists of five books, and is in the Chaucerian seven-line stanza.

Criseyde was this lady name a-right ;  
As to my dome, in all Troyes citee  
Was noon so fair, for passing every wight  
So aungellyk was her natyf beautee,  
That lyk a thing immortal semed she,  
As doth an hevenish parfit creature,  
That doun were sent in scorning of nature.

*ababbc*

4. **The Parlement of Foules.**—This is an allegorical poem of about the same period, and is considered to have reference to the negotiations, which lasted a year, concerning the marriage of Richard II. with Anne of Bohemia, for whose hand there were three competitors. The poem, in seven-line stanza, is cast in the form of a dream, and opens on St. Valentine's Day. The poet is reading *The Dream of Scipio* by Macrobius,<sup>3</sup> and, falling asleep, Scipio appears and leads him to a beautiful garden, where the goddess Nature presides, and all the birds are assembled to choose mates for the year. In her hand is a beautiful formel<sup>4</sup> eagle, and three competitors dispute as to which is to be the mate of the royal bird. Nature orders one of each order of birds to give an opinion on the matter, and here Chaucer's knowledge of open-air life and a touch of his delicate humour find expression. Weary of the discussion, the goddess asks the eagle to choose for herself, and she replies :—

<sup>1</sup> Boccaccio, a friend of Petrarch's, born in 1313, was the son of a Florentine merchant, and his early years were spent in business. He took to literature, and became celebrated as a poet and prose writer. His most famous work is the *Decameron*.

<sup>2</sup> Soldier of Love.

<sup>3</sup> A Latin writer who died A.D. 415.

<sup>4</sup> female.

My rightful lady goddesse of Nature,  
 Soth is it that I am ever under your yerde,<sup>1</sup>  
 Lyk as is everiche other creature,  
 And moot be youres whyl my lyf may dure;  
 And therfor graunteth me my firste bone,<sup>2</sup>  
 And myn entente I wol yow sey right sone . . .  
 Almighty quene, unto this yeer be doon  
 I aske respit for to avysen me.

5. **The House of Fame.**—This poem, in octosyllabic couplet, was written in 1384. It is an unfinished work in three books, and over 2,100 lines in length. It is thrown into the usual form of a dream, and the poet finds himself in a temple of glass, in which are golden images and paintings of figures and scenes from the whole range of classical literature. He is carried to the House of Fame by an eagle, on command of Jupiter, for his service to the cause of love. The house is perched on a rock of ice, a "feeble foundation," as the poet says, "on which to build a palace high." The poem shows his wide reading, and he takes the opportunity of the freedom allowed him in the allegory to discourse with wit and wisdom on men and things.

6. **The Legend of Good Women.**—This poem of 2,600 lines in length is in the rimed heroic couplet, and is written in honour of women noted for their constancy, as a recantation of what he had previously said of the female sex in his poems. The poet dreams that he was reproved by the god of love for having written lightly of women and the immortal passion. He is defended by Alcestris, who commands him, however, to write—

A glorious Legende,  
 Of Gode Wommen, maidenés and wyves,  
 That weren trewe in lovinge al hir lyves.

This is to be given to the Queen, so that the poem must have been written after 1382, the year of her arrival in England. He tells the story of nine women, and for these and his general plan he is indebted to Boccaccio and Ovid. The Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women* is of great interest for its personal details of Chaucer himself, and for containing, as it does, the finest of his lyric verses—*The Balade*.

Hyde, Absalon, thy gilte tresses clere.

<sup>1</sup> *rod* = correction.

<sup>2</sup> boon.

7. **The Canterbury Tales.**—Chaucer's greatest work, and that for which all his previous writings were more or less of a preparation, is his *Canterbury Tales*. He adopted the plan of Boccaccio in the *Decameron*,<sup>1</sup> in which a number of tales are told by ten ladies and gentlemen, who took up their residence in a villa outside the walls of Florence while a plague was raging in the city.

The shrine of St. Thomas-à-Becket at Canterbury was a famous scene of pilgrimage during the Middle Ages, and Chaucer brings together at the Tabard Inn, Southwark, twenty-nine pilgrims under the charge of Henry Bailey, the host. It is arranged that each member of the party is to tell two tales on the outward and two others on the homeward journey, and the teller of the best story was to sup at the expense of the rest of the party. The scheme was an ambitious one, as it was not only to include some hundred and twenty tales, including those of two persons who joined on the road, but also the doings of the pilgrims at Canterbury. There are, however, but twenty-four; two of these are told by the poet himself, one is unfinished, and another but a fragment.

Chaucer's conception was far superior to that of the *Decameron*; the Italian personages are of the same rank, and notwithstanding the art and skill displayed in the recital, the stories become more or less monotonous. Chaucer's pilgrims, on the contrary, are from every rank of society, except the very highest and lowest; they are skilfully portrayed, and the stories they tell are admirably selected so as to heighten the contrast. The Prologue to the Tales is a masterpiece, and his characters are drawn with astonishing freshness and vigour. [The Knight, with Squire and Yeoman, had fought in many lands, and escaped from fifteen "mortal battles." The Prioress, Madame Eglentyne, "ful simple and coy," spoke French "after the scole of Stratford-atte-Bowe." The Wife of Bath is one of the most perfectly sketched characters of the whole series. She says: "Housbondes at chirche-dore I have had fyve"; she had been on many pilgrimages, to Rome, Cologne, Compostella, and thrice to Jerusalem. With tender and graceful touches Chaucer depicts the Poor Parson. Patient in adversity,

<sup>1</sup> *Deka*, ten, and *hemera*, a day; each of the ten persons tells a tale daily for ten days, thus making a hundred tales in all.



he gave of his little substance to the poor; he did not press for tithes; staff in hand he walked throughout his wide parish; he "sette nat his benefice to hire," and ran not to St. Paul's, London, to seek a "chaunterie for soules," but stayed at home that no wolf might enter his fold. He followed no pomp and reverence—

But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,  
He taughte, and first he folwed it himselve. ✓

In striking contrast to him the luxurious Monk is drawn in a few graphic touches. He is the owner of many fine horses, and is given much to the chase. He did not soil his hands with work, as Augustine bade. The sleeves of his gown were tipped with costly fur, and his hood fastened with a gold pin, from which hung a love-knot. The merry Friar was one given to the worship of the world and the flesh, who sweetly held confession and gave pleasant absolution. The Sompnour, or summoner to the ecclesiastical courts, is inimitably drawn. ✓ He is a repulsive, scurvy-browed knave, with pimpled face which no apothecary's shop could clean. He has a worthy companion in the Pardoner, or seller of papal pardons and relics, with glaring eyes, and yellow hair hanging like hanks of flax—

Upon a day he gat him more moneye  
Than that the parson gat in monthes tweye.

The Clerk of Oxenford was ill-clad and ill-mounted; all his money went in books.

Souninge in moral vertu was his speche  
And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.

There was a Sergeant of the Lawe, a Frankelyn, a Doctor, Merchant, a Shipman who knew every creek from Gothland to Finisterre, many Tradesmen, three Priests, a Cook, and a Plowman, so perfect a character that Chaucer was no doubt influenced by Langland in depicting him. Never was a merrier set of travellers brought together, and we have not only in the tales they tell, but in the happy incidents, apt allusions, and descriptive scenes, a vivid picture of the life of England of the fourteenth century.

8. **The Knight's Tale** is taken from the *Theseide* of Boccaccio, and tells the story of Palamon and Arcite, their friendship, im-

prisonment, and contest for the hand of Emelye, sister-in-law of Theseus, Duke of Athens. Arcite is unhorsed in the tournament at the moment of victory by the interference of Pluto, and Palamon weds Emelye. The farewell words of Arcite are given in lines of much pathos and beauty; and the Temple of Mars and its ghastly contents are described with great power:—

Ther stood the temple of Mars armipotente,  
 Wroght al of burned steel, of which thentree  
 Was long and streit, and gastly for to see. . . .  
 Ther saugh I first the derke imagining  
 Of felonye, and al the compassing;  
 The cruel ire, reed as any glede;<sup>1</sup>  
 The pykepurs,<sup>2</sup> and eek the pale drede;  
 The smyler with the knyfe under the cloke;  
 The shepne<sup>3</sup> brenning<sup>4</sup> with the blake smoke . . .  
 The sleere<sup>5</sup> of him-self yet saugh I ther,  
 His herte-blood hath bathed al his heer;  
 The nayl y-driven in the shode<sup>6</sup> a-night;  
 The colde deeth, with mouth gaping upright.

The **Sergeant of the Lawe** tells the tale of Constance, related also by Gower. She is the daughter of the Roman Emperor, and is married to the **Sultan of Syria** on condition of his becoming a Christian. He is murdered by his mother, and Constance is sent adrift on the sea. Reaching Northumbria, she marries Alla, the King, whose mother ultimately banishes her during the King's absence, and she returns to Rome. Alla kills his mother, and proceeds to Rome on penance, where he discovers Constance.

The **Prioress** relates the story of a little Christian boy killed by Jews in a town in Asia for saying his *Alma Redemptoris Mater*.

The Host calls on Chaucer—

And seyde thus, "What man artow?" quod he;  
 "Thou lokest as thou woldest finde an hare,  
 For ever upon the ground I see thee stare.  
 Approche neer, and loke up merily.  
 Now war yow, sirs, and lat this man have place;  
 He in the waast is shape as wel as I . . .  
 He seccneth elvish by his countenance,  
 For unto no wight dooth he daliaunce."

The poet playfully hits at the old romances in his *Tale of Sir*

<sup>1</sup> bright coal.

<sup>2</sup> pick-purse.

<sup>3</sup> stables.

<sup>4</sup> burning.

<sup>5</sup> slayer.

<sup>6</sup> temple.

*Thopas* in ballad form. The Host can stand but little of the "rym dogerel," as he calls it, and Chaucer tells *The Tale of Melibeus* in prose.

The fine tale of Cambuscan, lord of *Tartary*, and *Canace*, his daughter, told by the *Squire*, is unfinished. Spenser takes it up in later times in the fourth book of *The Faerie Queene*, and refers to the poet in the well-known lines—

Dan Chaucer, well of English undefyled,  
On fames eternall beadroll worthie to be fyled.

Milton in *Il Penseroso* refers to the tale of myth and marvel:—

Call up him that left half told  
The story of Cambuscan bold,  
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,  
And who had Canace to wife,  
That owned the virtuous ring and glass,  
And of the wondrous horse of brass,  
On which the Tartar King did ride.

The Clerk of *Oxenford* relates<sup>1</sup> the popular story of *Patient Griseldis*, which he says he learned of Petrarch<sup>1</sup> in Padua, and which is also told in the *Decameron*; and the *Nonne Preeste* tells the well-known tale of *The Cock and the Fox*. Other stories are told of a comic nature, of trickery and deceit, but full of matchless humour. *The Canterbury Tales* must be read to understand fully the wealth of Chaucer's genius, and the grace and vigour of his style.

9. *Chaucer's Verse*.—Chaucer was a very careful metrist, and, under modern criticism, many poems once attributed to him have been rejected as his, chiefly because they do not conform to his rules of versification. He uses many forms of verse, as we have seen, and some for the first time. The seven-line stanza is largely used by him, riming as follows: the first and third; the second, fourth, and fifth; the sixth and seventh. Most of *The Canterbury Tales* are written in the rimed-heroic couplet, in lines of ten syllables or five accents; sometimes there

<sup>1</sup> Francisco Petrarch was born at Arezzo, Italy, 1304, and died near Padua, 1374. His best known work consists of his *Canzoniere*, or sonnets and odes in honour of a certain "Laura," said to have been the wife of Hugues de Sade. To her he paid the conventional homage of the early troubadours. He received the laurel crown in Rome, April 8th, 1341.

are eleven syllables, and occasionally nine. The final *es*, *ed*, *en*, *er*, and *e* are distinct syllables at the end of a line, and at the caesura or pause. The exceptions to this rule are when the next word begins with a vowel, or *h* in certain words, such as *he*, *her*, *honour*. The final *e* is, however, often silent, as in the case of the personal pronouns *oure*, *youre*, *hire*, *here*, and other words of one syllable. The vowel *e* also has an open sound as *ae*, as *grete*, great; and a close sound as *meke*, meek. The following stanza will help the student to understand the use of the final *e* :—

In Surrye whilom dwelt a companye  
Of chapmen riche, and therto sadde and trewe,  
That wyde-where senten hir spicerye,  
Clothes of gold, and Satyns riche of hewe;  
His chaffare<sup>1</sup> was so thrifty and so newe,  
That euery wight hath deyntee<sup>2</sup> to chaffare  
With hem, and eek to sellen hem hir warre.

Chaucer's influence on the national language has been incalculable. From the Norman Conquest to the fourteenth century it had formed itself into many dialects, of which the East Midland was the most free of peculiarities and the simplest in grammatical form. "From this Babylonish confusion of speech," says Marsh, "the influence and example of Chaucer did more to rescue his native tongue than any single cause." In Chaucer's hands the language became a mighty medium of literary expression, and he is of right, as Dryden calls him, "The Father of English Poetry."

10. Langland and Chaucer: A Contrast.—We have seen that the English written by these two poets was practically the same; and that the proportion of French words employed by them was pretty much the same in both cases; but Langland is more vernacular, and hence more difficult to read. The tendencies of the two were very different. The Norman strain predominates in Chaucer; the Saxon strain in Langland. Chaucer describes the rich, the splendid, the knightly side of English life, the court, the castle, and the city; Langland is fond of describing the life of the homely poor—ill-fed, hard-worked, the life of rural and provincial England, oppressed by the injustices of superiors and even of the law. In the form of the poetry the contrast is strong also. Chaucer

<sup>2</sup> great liking.



uses, and is fond of French (or Provençal) rime; he despised and sneered at the Saxon head-rime, or alliterative verse. He makes his Parson say

I can nat geste, rom, ram, ruf—by lettre.

Chaucer gives us well-marked and picturesque individuals; every kind of person in the Middle Ages is depicted for us in *The Canterbury Tales*; the inarticulate grumblings and pains of the multitude and the ignorant masses are presented by Langland. His is the first great democratic cry in the language. Chaucer is a more cosmopolitan poet; he has been influenced by French and by Italian poetry and culture. Langland is a genuine insular Englishman—an Englishman and nothing more. He has indeed been called "the typical insular." The figures on the canvas of Chaucer are glittering, joyous figures. Piers Plowman paints the poor labouring classes, honest and courageous, but squalid and ill-dressed. Langland represents the seriousness and solidity of the Germanic races; he was much more of a Teuton than of a Celt. Chaucer represents the lucid, gay temperament of the Latinised Celt.

#### THE FRIENDS AND FOLLOWERS OF CHAUCER.

1. **John Gower** (1327—1408) was an intimate friend of Chaucer's—born some years before him, and dying eight years after him. Chaucer calls him "the moral Gower." He is the author of three long poems—one written in French, one in English, and one in Latin. The title of the French poem is *Speculum Meditantis* (The Mirror of the Thinker); of the English poem, *Confessio Amantis* (The Confession of the Lover); of the Latin poem, *Vox Clamantis* (The Voice of one Crying). The French he wrote was that kind of Norman-French which came to be called the "French of Stratford-atte-Bowe"—the French that Chaucer's Prioress spoke. He wrote also *Cinkante Balades* (Fifty Ballads) in French. Gower was a pious man all his life; and, when old age came upon him, he retired, with his wife, to the priory of St. Mary Overy's—now St. Saviour's, Southwark. He was a generous bene-

factor to the church, in which he was buried, and where his fine tomb is to be seen—his head reposing on his three chief works. He was a rich man and of good family, owned large manors in Kent, and attended the Court, where he was on good terms with Richard II. The evils of that King's reign are strongly denounced in *Vox Clamantis*, and he is bitterly attacked in the poet's *Chronicon Tripartitum*.

(i) Chaucer dedicated to Gower his poem of *Troilus and Cressida*.

(ii) Gower left his wife "three cups, two salt-cellars, twelve silver spoons, all his beds and chests, and the income of two manors." He also took care to leave various sums of money to have lamps kept burning in the chapel where he was buried, and masses said for the repose of his soul.

96  
2 **His Position in Literature and in History.**—Gower's poems are dull, feeble, and monotonous; and few now think of reading them. But his place in English literature is of considerable significance. He marks the meeting of the three languages which had been used in England for many centuries; and the fact that he wrote poetry in all three is worthy of notice. From the seventh to the sixteenth century (and even later) all learned men wrote in Latin. For centuries Norman-French influence prevented English from being cultivated by men of genius and talent, and kept it in the background; and it was not till the time of Layamon and Orm (the thirteenth century) that English writings were thought worthy the expense of parchment. And now we find a literary man standing at the parting of the three ways as if undecided on writing in English, and not adopting it until the example had been set by Chaucer. Gower's English poem is written in octosyllabic couplets—there are more than 15,000 of them—and in eight books. In the year 1385 it was dedicated to his personal friend, Richard II., but the version of 1392-3 contains a dedication to the Duke of Lancaster, afterwards Henry IV. :—

Unto mine owne Iorde,  
Which of Lancastre is Henry named.

In the earlier version Gower makes a very kindly reference to Chaucer. He represents Venus, at the end of the poem, as saying :—

And grete well Chaucer, whan ye mete,  
 As my disciple and my poete,  
 For in the floures of his youth,  
 In sondry wise, as he well couth,<sup>1</sup>  
 Of dittees and of songes glade,  
 The which he for my sake made  
 The lond<sup>2</sup> fulfilled is over all,<sup>3</sup>  
 Whereof to him in speciall  
 Above all other I am most holde.

Gower suppressed the passage in the later version of his work.

(i) The *Speculum Meditantis* is a long work of about 30,000 lines dealing with vices and virtues. It was lost, but having been recently discovered, was published in 1900 by the Clarendon Press, in the complete edition of Gower's works edited by Mr. G. C. Macaulay.

(ii) Gower's Latin poem, the *Vox Clamantis*, was suggested to him by the rising of the Kentish peasants and farmers in 1381. They were led by Wat Tyler, Jack Straw, and John Ball, a priest. The cause of the rising was the heavy weight of taxation, especially of the cruel poll-tax. Gower, as a landowner in Kent, must have suffered from the confusion and havoc wrought by the peasantry in that county.

(iii) His English poem, the *Confessio Amantis*, was written at the personal request of the young King Richard II. In the first version of it he called it "A boke for King Richardes sake." But, when the King fell, this line was altered into "A boke for Englondes sake."

*Q. 3.* **John Lydgate** (1370—1450).—Lydgate was a disciple and also a personal acquaintance of Chaucer's. He was a monk of the monastery of Bury St. Edmund's, which he entered at the age of fifteen, and became a sub-deacon in 1389. Lydgate was a most industrious and prolific writer; he is said to have studied at the Universities of Oxford, Paris, and Padua, and held a kind of position as court poet under Henry IV., Henry V., and, for a short time, under Henry VI. He wrote all kinds of things—tales, lays, fabliaux, satires, romances, ballads, Lives of the Saints, love-poems, and even a version of Aesop's *Fables*. He wrote about 5,000 verses every year—more than even Crabbe or Southey, and at his death he left behind him more than 130,000 lines. Many of the minor poems attributed to Chaucer are now known to be Lydgate's. His most important poem is the *Fall of Princes*, which is written in the seven-lined stanza employed by Chaucer. In the first book,

<sup>1</sup> *couth* = could.

<sup>2</sup> *lond* = land; so Chaucer.

<sup>3</sup> *over all* = everywhere.

he makes Canace, condemned to death, plead with her brother for the safety of her child :—

A mouth he has, but wordes hath he noon ;  
 Cannot complain, alas ! for no outrage,  
 Nor grudgeth not, but lies here all alone,  
 Still as a lamb, most meek of his visage.  
 What heart of steel could do to him damage,  
 Or suffer him die, beholding the manere,  
 And look benign of his twain eyen clear !

(i) His other best known poems are *The Destruction of Troy* and *The Siege of Thebes*.

(ii) "Lydgate was not only the poet of the monastery, but of the world in general. If a disguising was intended by the Company of Goldsmiths, a mask before his Majesty at Eltham, a May-game for the Sheriffs and Aldermen of London, a mumming before the Lord Mayor, a procession of pageants from the Creation for the Festival of Corpus Christi, or a carol for the Coronation, Lydgate was consulted, and gave the poetry."—WARTON.

One of Lydgate's occasional poems is *The London Lyckpenny*. The poet had come to London on legal business, and describes what he saw and heard in Westminster, in Cheap, and in Cornhill.

Then unto London I did me hye,  
 Of all the land it beareth the pryse ;  
 "Hot peascods !" one began to cry ;  
 "Straberry ripe !" and "Cherryes in the rise !"  
 One bad me come near and by some spyce ;  
 Peper and safforne they gan me bede ;<sup>2</sup>  
 But, for lack of money, I might not spede.<sup>3</sup>

He is offered fat ribs of beef ; velvet, silk, and lawn ; hot sheep's feet ; mackerel and green rushes ; pies ; wine ; clothing. He loses his hood in the crowd ; and in a few minutes he sees it hanging for sale in Cornhill. "I knew it well, as I did my creed" ; but he did not think it right to buy back his own hood—in fact, he had not enough money.

14 Thomas Occleve (circa 1368—1454), a lawyer and a clerk of the Privy Seal, was another follower of Chaucer. He produced a long poem, in rime-royal, *De Regimine Principum* (Government of Princes), and dedicated it to Henry V., when Prince of Wales, in 1412. This book, "lugubrious and desultory," is a translation of a work by Aegidius Romanus ; it has little attraction for the

<sup>1</sup> on the twig.    <sup>2</sup> began to offer.    <sup>3</sup> get on.

student, but it contains what many have been glad to look at—  
an authentic portrait of Chaucer :—

O mayster dere, and fadir reverent,  
My mayster Chaucer, floure of eloquence,  
Mirrour of fructuous entendement !<sup>1</sup>

The portrait is painted on the margin of the Arundel ms. in the British Museum ; and the likeness agrees with all other statements regarding the appearance of Chaucer, including his own in the Host's remarks :—

Thou lookest as thou woldest finde an hare.

---

<sup>1</sup> fruitful understanding.



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE PROSE WRITERS OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

**Four Prose Writers.**—The four chief prose-writers of the fourteenth century are, in order of the dates of their productions, the person hitherto known as Sir John Mandeville, John Wyclif, John de Trevisa, and Geoffrey Chaucer. All of these writers showed their powers over prose, not by original writing, but by translations. Nothing is known of the Englishman who translated from the French version *Sir John Mandeville's Travels*; but his was undoubtedly the most fluent and readable prose of the four writers. John Wyclif's best known work in prose is his translation of the Bible; John de Trevisa turned into English a history by Ralph (or Ranulph) Higden called the *Polychronicon*, and produced in 1352; while Chaucer translated Boëthius's Latin treatise on *The Consolation of Philosophy*, a book that had been translated either by or for King Alfred five centuries before.

**2. Sir John Mandeville.**—The person who wrote *Mandeville's Travels* is believed to have been a French or Flemish physician of Liège, who adopted this name as his *nom de plume*, and wrote the book in French. He professed to belong to St. Albans, to have left home on Michaelmas Day of 1322, to have spent about forty years in the service of the Sultan and of the "Great Cham"<sup>1</sup> (the Emperor of China) and in travelling in Asia and in parts of Africa. He is said to have produced his book in 1356. Some one turned it into Latin; and another and much abler writer translated it into English—into "one of the best and oldest specimens of simple and flowing

<sup>1</sup> Cham = Khan, prince or emperor.



English prose." His book is one of the most interesting and entertaining volumes in our literature. It is as full of marvellous stories as the *History* of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Regarded as a whole, his work is really a "road-book," or guide to the Holy Land; but it is also an anthology constructed out of the writings of Marco Polo, Odoric, and other daring travellers. This French physician, whose name appears to have been John de Bourgogne (usually called "John with the Beard"—Jean à la Barbe), invented Sir John Mandeville as Swift invented Gulliver, and as Defoe invented Robinson Crusoe. Mandeville visits Jerusalem, China, the Country of the Five Thousand Islands (Oceania), picks up stories out of all sorts of books—tales of travel, books of fables, books of dreams, and others. He describes the artificial hatching of eggs in Cairo, mentions a tree that produces wool (cotton), and points out that the world is round by the proof that if sailors start from their own country and keep their ship's head always in the same direction, they will come back to their own country again. He mentions an experiment of his own—that he kept diamonds always wetted with May dew and found them to increase in size. His vocabulary is quite simple and indeed modern; and the charm of his book lies in its naïveté, and in the varied and picturesque colouring in which he constantly indulges. The following is an example:—

CALDILHE, A COUNTRY BEYOND CATHAY.

And there groweth a maner of fruyt, as though it weren gowrdes: and whan thei ben ripe, men kутten hem a-to, and men synden with-inne a lytylle best, in flesch, in bon and blode, as though it were a lytylle lomb with-outen wolfe. And men eten bothie the frut and the best: and that is a gret merveylle. Of that frute I have eten; alle-though it were wondirfulle: but that I knowe wel, that God is merveyllous in his werkes. And natheles I tolde hem of als gret a merveylle to hem, that is amonges us: and that was of the Bernakes.<sup>1</sup> For I tolde hem, that in oure contree weren trees, that baren a fruyt, that becomen briddes fleeynge: and thei that fellen in the water, lyven; and thei that fallen on the erthe, dyen anon: and thei ben right gode to mannes mete. And here-of had thei als gret mervaylle, that summe of hem trowed, it were an impossible thing to be.

(i) Marco Polo (1254—1324) was a celebrated Venetian traveller. He travelled to Cambaluc (Pekin), where he had an interview with the Emperor, Kublai Khan. Kublai sent him as an envoy to the Pope with a request that he would send him a hundred learned men to instruct his subjects in

<sup>1</sup> barnacles—a species of goose.

Christianity and the liberal arts. Marco left China in 1292 and returned to Venice by way of Sumatra, India, and Persia. Marco, his father and his uncle, were the first European travellers in China.

(ii) Odoric (1286—1331) was a Franciscan friar, who travelled in Western Asia, India, China, and Thibet.

(iii) *Mandeville's Travels* was exceedingly popular in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and one proof of this is that there are now in existence three hundred manuscript copies of it.

(iv) Mandeville used to be called the "Father of English Prose"—a title also given to John Wyclif and Sir Thomas More. But the title is somewhat idle; and English Prose had a great deal more than one beginning.

3. **John Wyclif** (1324—1384) was born at Spreswell, a hamlet near the town of Old Richmond, in the North Riding of Yorkshire. He was educated at Oxford, where he appears to have been a Fellow of Merton College, and subsequently Master of Balliol at the early age of thirty-five. He afterwards held several livings, but finally settled down as Rector of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire. What stimulated his powers of writing was his hatred of the papacy, both on religious and political grounds. Wyclif joined the party of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and was sent with him as an envoy to Bruges, where they were to discuss the various papal claims. His tracts and treatises soon brought him under the suspicion of heterodoxy; and he was summoned to appear in St. Paul's to answer charges of heresy in the year 1377. He was accompanied to the cathedral by John of Gaunt with a body of armed retainers. This fiery prince, in the course of the long technical discussions, stood up and declared that, if Wyclif were condemned, he would himself drag the bishop out of the cathedral by the hair of the head. The Convocation then broke up, and a similar attempt to suppress the ardent reformer was again made. He was summoned before the Papal Commissioners at Lambeth; but the trial was stopped by the intervention of the Princess of Wales, widow of the Black Prince. Wyclif died quietly at his rectory of Lutterworth on the last day of the year 1384.

(i) Wyclif's name is said to be spelt in forty-two different ways. This is quite likely, as we have the permutations of the letters in the spelling Wickliffe, and Wyckliffe, to draw upon.

(ii) Wyclif saw his opportunity when he found two Popes in the Church (the Schism of 1378—1417). One Pope ruled at Rome; an Anti-pope at Avignon, in the South of France.

(iii) Wyclif did not love the Mendicant Friars, many of whom in spite of

*Separation in a church  
from diversity of doctrine*

their vows of poverty, had become corrupt, greedy, and money-loving; and he established an irregular order of "poor priests," or "simple priests," who went about from village to village preaching everywhere, but not begging.

4. **Wyclif's Writings.**—His chief claim to a place in the history of English Literature rests on his translation of the Bible into the mother-tongue. In this work he was assisted by Nicholas of Hereford, who translated the Old Testament, while he himself translated the New. The translation was made from the Latin Vulgate. It was completed in 1382. Some time after, John Purvey, under the superintendence of Wyclif, revised it, corrected its errors, expunged its Latinisms, and made it a model of forcible, simple, and direct English prose. His enemies spoke of Wyclif as "an organ of Satan, the idol of heretics, the mirror of hypocrites, the incensor of schism, the sower of hatred, the fabricator of falsehoods," with other similar flowers of rhetoric. By order of the Council of Constance (1414—1418) his body was dug up and burnt, and his ashes thrown into the River Swift.

#### SERMON.

The story of this gospel telleth good lore, how prelates should teach folk under them. The story is plain, how Christ stood by the river of Gennesaret, and fishers come down to wash therein their nets; and Christ went up to a boat that was Simon's, and prayed him to move it a little from the land, and He sate and taught the people out of the boat. And when Christ ceased to speak, He said to Simon, "Lead the boat into the high sea, and let out your nets to taking of fish." And Simon, answering, said to Him, "Commander, all the night travailling took we nought; but in Thy word shall I loose the net." And when they had done this they took a plenteous multitude of fish, and their net was broken. But they beckoned to their fellows that were in the other boat to come and help them; and they came and filled both boats of fish, so that well nigh were they both dreynt.

5. **John de Trevisa** (1326—1412) was Vicar of Berkeley, in Gloucestershire. His only title to fame is that he wrote a translation of the *Polychronicon* (Universal History) of Ralph, or Ranulph, Higden, a monk of Chester, who died in 1363. Trevisa's translation was completed in 1387. The most noteworthy remark in Trevisa's *History* is that "since the furste moreyn"<sup>1</sup> (the first Great Plague), the fashion of translating Latin into French in schools was given up, and boys were allowed to turn their Latin into English. And he points out that, in the year 1385, "in alle

<sup>1</sup> murrain.

the gramere scoles of Engelond, children leveth Frensche and lerneth an Engliche." This, he thinks, is a pity; for the children know no more French "than their left heel"; and, if they have to cross the seas and travel, they will find themselves in a difficulty. And even "gentil men" have given up teaching their children French. The French spoken in England hence became corrupted (people spoke "French after the scole of Stratford-atte-Bow" or "French of the furthest end of Norfolke"); but English was the gainer, for the better and stronger minds began to use that language in writing, began to cultivate it, and to take care of its idioms and its rhythms.

*De incolarum linguis.*

Dis apeyryng of þe burþ tonge ys by-cause of twey þinges: on ys, for chylðern in scole, azenes þe usage and manere of al other nacions, both compelled for to leue here oune longage, and for to construe here lessons and here þinges a Freynsch, and habbeþ suþthe the Normans come furst in-to Engelond. Also, gentil men children buþ ytauht for to speke Freynsch fram tyme that a buþ yrokked in here cradel, and conneþ speke and playe wiþ a child hys brouch; and oplondysch men wol lykne ham-sylf to gentil men, and fondeþ with gret bysynes for to speke Freynsch, for to be more ytold of.

6. Chaucer (1340—1400).—Chaucer's prose, like his verse, was written entirely in English. He knew Latin, and could write it with ease and power; he knew French and admired it; but he prefers to use the national language, "the King's English." And he employed English as it was in his day, and did not waste his force in striving for impossible reforms, in swimming against the set of the national current. Chaucer's best known prose work is his translation of Boëthius's *Consolation of Philosophy*. In *The Canterbury Tales* he wrote *The Parson's Tale* and *The Tale of Melibeus* in prose. For his son Lewis he also wrote *The Tretis of the Astrolabie*. The opening lines of the prologue to the last is as follows:—

Litell Lowis, my sone, I have perceiued wel by certeyne evidences thyn abilite to lerne sciencez touching noumbres and proporciouns; and as wel considere I thy bisy preyere in special to lerne *The Tretis of the Astrolabie*. Than, for as mechel as a filosofre seith, "he wrappeth him in his frend, that condescendeth to the rightful prayers of his frend," ther-for have I geuen thee a suffisant Astrolabie as for oure orizonte, compowned after the latitude of Oxenford; upon which, by mediacion of this litel tretis, I purpose to teche thee a certein nombre of conclusions apertening to the same instrument.



## ✓ CHAPTER V.

---

### ✓ BALLAD POETRY AND THE SCOTTISH POETS OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

1. **The Fifteenth Century.**—The fifteenth century did not contribute much to English poetic literature. It is the most barren in the history of the language. Chaucer had many followers and imitators; and some of their poems were freely attributed to the master himself. *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* and *The Flower and the Leaf* are the two imitations that are best known. The writers of these imitations kept close to the style and manner of Chaucer; but none of them caught the sweet music of his lines, or the inner art of his poetry. Lydgate and Occleve, Skelton and Hawes, do not present us with a body of poetry which can excite very high admiration. But it is to the latter half of this century that we owe most of that kind of poetic literature, which goes by the name of ballad poetry. Most of this poetry was never written down, never printed, but was carried about in the memories of Englishmen and Scotsmen for hundreds of years. In passing from the mouth of the reciter to the ears of a listener, who in his turn became a reciter, a ballad would be altered—altered to suit local circumstances, national feeling, personal preferences—and here and there a poetic or picturesque phrase would be introduced; and so it would come about that a large number of “makers” or poets worked at one poem or historic ballad or romance. These ballads were recited or chanted or sung to the harp by itinerant minstrels, strollers from hall to hamlet, from tavern to cottage, from fair to market with songs old or new, or

newly revised. Most of the ballads had a suitable tune attached to them; but one tune often served to accompany many ballads. Some were chanted or musically recited; and everywhere—upon the settles within the wide chimney-nook of a farmhouse, or on the bench under the meeting-tree of the village green—the ballads found willing and even eager listeners. Each trade guild, the bodies of apprentices, and the ploughmen “upon land,” had their own favourite songs.

(i) “The Ballads owe no little of their merit to the countless riddlings, siftings, shiftings, omissions, and additions of innumerable reciters.”—ALLINGHAM.

(ii) “They were transmitted orally for many generations, and, consequently, in countless varied versions.”—*Idem*.

2. **What a Ballad is.**—A ballad is, in the general acceptation of the word, a short narrative poem, which may be either sung or recited. Such a poem is partly epic and partly lyric; and in some ballads a dramatic form is employed. As applied to the minstrelsy of the Border, whether English or Scotch, or to the narrative poems of Scandinavia or of Spain, the ballad may be regarded as a minor epic. The subjects were such as the exploits of warriors, the adventures of lovers, the mysteries of fairyland; and the rehearsals of them were given in musical recitative to the accompaniment of the harp or the cithern. A simple and daring imagination, deep feeling, the passions common to all mankind, tragic situations—these are the ordinary features of our ballads. Some have a historic basis; but the events recorded have been so changed in time, in place, and in name—“thrice-and-thirty times confounded by alterations in the course of oral transmission”—that they can hardly be recognised, much less identified with real occurrences.

3. **Authors of the Ballads.**—If it is asked, Who made the ballads? it is impossible to tell. No one knows. Many existed for centuries before Chaucer, and were passed on from generation to generation, and from shire to shire, with such changes as suited the feelings or circumstances of the nation. They were composed “by the people for the people”; and this is the case also with the Volkslieder of Germany, Denmark, and other



countries. It is interesting also to observe that most of the stories in the popular ballads are common to different countries; and this general foundation is a mark of great antiquity—of an antiquity that far transcends any written record. Some of the shorter ballads were sung at the ploughing and seed-time, some at the harvest, some at weddings, others at burials. They appeared in the thirteenth, the fourteenth, and the fifteenth centuries; and yet many of them were not committed to type till the eighteenth. It is worthy of note that, though we do not in most instances know who wrote the ballads of our country, there existed among the people an anonymous body of literature which was equal, if not superior, to many of the works to which the names of celebrated authors were affixed. This literature was, in fact, composed by a large number of sensitive and imaginative persons, whose names are unknown, in their most impressionable and excited moments.

4. **The Most Famous Ballads.**—The best known, and probably the best, ballads are *Sir Patrick Spens*, *Edom o' Gordon*, *The Nut-brown Maid*, *Binnorie*, *Chevy Chace*, *Battle of Otterburn*, and some of the Robin Hood cycle. *Sir Patrick Spens* tells the story of a tragedy of the thirteenth century. An expedition was sent by the Scottish king to Norway in 1285, to bring to Scotland the "Maid of Norway" to be married to the young heir to the Scottish throne. The vessel was wrecked on the Orkneys. *Edom o' Gordon* (Adam Gordon) describes the burning of the House or Castle of the Rodes and the cruel death of a young lady of the House of Forbes. *The Nut-brown Maid* is a *disputoison*, and the finest ever composed. The *motif* of *Binnorie*, in which an elder sister drowns the younger for love of a knight, is also found in a Scandinavian ballad. *Chevy Chace* relates a hunting raid into the Scottish Border by the Earl of Northumberland, and the subsequent encounter with Douglas and his followers. The events in the Battle of Otterburn, which was fought in 1388, are the subject of another ancient ballad. These incidents seem to be mixed up in the various versions of *Chevy Chace*.

The following stanzas are from the earliest version of the latter ballad, published by Bishop Percy:—

This begane on a Monday at morn,  
In Cheviat the hillys so he (high);  
The chyld may rue that ys un-born,  
It was the mor pitté. . . .

Of fifteen hondrith archars of Ynglonde  
Went away but fifti and thre;  
Of twenty hondrith spear-men of Skotlonde,  
But even five and fifti.

(i) Chevy Chace is said to be an imitative corruption of the French word *chevauchée*—a raid or expedition. The word *chevauchée* gives the schoolboy the word *chivy*.

(ii) A *disputoison* (= disputation) was the Old French mediaeval name for a dialogue. M. Jusserand calls *The Nut-brown Maid* "that exquisite combination of popular and artistic poetry written by a nameless author, and the finest of the disputoisons in English literature." Of it Percy says, "If it had no other merit than having afforded the ground-work to Prior's *Henry and Emma*, this ought to preserve it from oblivion."

The hero is supposed to be a follower of Robin Hood, and unduly tries the love and constancy of the heroine. He commences:—

I am the knight; I come by night  
As secret as I can;  
Saying, "Alas! thus standeth the case:  
I am a banisht man."

To this the "Maid" replies:—

Mine own heart dear, with you what cheer?  
I pray you tell anon;  
For, in my mind, of all mankind  
I love but you alone.

He tells her that he has done a deed that will bring him under the ban of the law, and must to the greenwood. She offers to accompany him. He points out the hardships of such a life. She will brave all in his company. He points out that he may be taken and hanged. She can only reply, "I love but you alone." He cannot think of carrying off "a baron's child." She replies, that if he will not take her, she will die "soon after ye be gone." Even the declaration that he has another and a fairer love does not shake this model of constancy; so that he finally discloses himself, admitting that all these were but trials of her love, and closes the long "disputation" as follows:—

Now understand: to Westmorland  
Which is my heritage,  
I will you bring; and with a ring  
By way of marriage  
I will you take, and lady make  
As shortly as I can:  
Thus have you won an earl's son  
And not a banisht man.

5. **The Characteristics of Ballad Poetry.**—The marks of the best ballad poetry are simplicity and directness. When the events and the situations are pathetic or tragic, the simplicity deepens the pathos and intensifies the tragedy. When the young daughter is thrown out of the window of the Castle of the Rodes, and gets "a deadly fall" on the point of Gordon's spear, the ballad goes on:—

O bonnie, bonnie was her mouth  
 And cherry were her cheeks,  
 And clear, clear was her yellow hair,  
 Whereon the red blood dreeps.<sup>1</sup>  
 Then wi' his spear he turned her owre,  
 O gin<sup>2</sup> her face was wan!  
 He said, "Ye are the first that e'er  
 I wish'd alive again."  
 He turned her owre and owre again,  
 O gin her skin was white!  
 "I might hae spared that bonnie face  
 To hae been some man's delight."

When, in the ballad of *Sir Patrick Spens*, the embassy returns no more, the pathos of the following quatrains is intensified by their extreme simplicity:—

O lang, lang, may the ladies sit  
 Wi' their fans into their hand,  
 Or eir they see Sir Patrick Spens  
 Come sailing to the land!  
 O lang, lang, may the ladies stand,  
 Wi' thair goud kaims<sup>3</sup> in their hair,  
 A' waiting for their ain deir lords!  
 For they'll see them nae mair.  
 Half owre,<sup>4</sup> half owre to Aberdour,  
 It's fiftie fathom deep;  
 And there lies guid Sir Patrick Spens  
 Wi' the Scots lords at his feet.

6. **The Robin Hood Cycle.**—Whether Robin Hood was ever a real person no one can now tell; but around him and his doings

<sup>1</sup> *dreeps* = drips.

<sup>2</sup> *O gin* = O if; a Scots idiomatic exclamation.

<sup>3</sup> *goud* = gold. *kaims* = combs.

<sup>4</sup> *owre* = over. Aberdour is a small town on the left shore of the Firth of Forth. Professor Aytoun says, in illustration of the expression "half owre to Aberdour," that in the little island of Papa Stronsay, in the Orkneys, is a tumulus, known as "the grave of Sir Patrick Spens." He would thus have got but half-way to Scotland when he was wrecked.

and adventures have clustered a large number—some fifty or more—of ballads. He is said to have lived in the reign of Henry II., to have been a man of noble birth, but outlawed for some reason unknown, to have been followed by a number of “merry men,” chief of whom was John Nailor (called Little John, because he was the tallest of the band), Will Scathelocke (or Scarlett), George à Green, Much (a miller’s son), and Friar Tuck. There was also Robin Hood’s wife, Maid Marian. He had at one time a hundred archers with him. They all lived together in “the green forest,” shot the King’s deer, robbed the rich, helped the poor, went regularly to mass with Friar Tuck, and were always courteous and kind to women and children. Their spiritual foes were “bishoppes and archbishoppes,” and their legal enemy was the Sheriff of Nottingham. Thus Robin Hood became the impersonation of the popular dislike of the cruel forest laws. The ordinary cycle of the Robin Hood ballads generally consists of “eight fyttes”; and the whole was generally called *The Lytell Geste of Robin Hooode*, and was so printed by Wynkin de Worde (the successor of William Caxton), in 1489, in a copy preserved in the Public Library at Cambridge.

(i) Robin Hood’s courtesy :—

Robin was a proude outlawe  
 Whylës he walked on grounde,  
 So curteyse an outlawe as he was one  
 Was never none yfounde.<sup>1</sup>

(ii) Robin Hood’s preferences :—

“Therefore no force,” sayd Robin,  
 “We shall do well enow;  
 But loke ye do no housbonde harme  
 That tylleth with his plough;  
 “No more ye shall no good yeman  
 That walketh by grene wode shawe<sup>2</sup>  
 Ne no knyght, ne no squyer,  
 That wolde be a good felawe.  
 “These byshoppes, and these archebyshoppes,  
 Ye shall them bete and bynde;  
 The hye sherif of Notynghame,  
 Hym holdē in your mynd.”

<sup>1</sup> The *y* in *yfounde* is a paring down of the old sign of the past participle. The *ge* still remains in German: e.g., *gefunden*.

<sup>2</sup> *shawe* = a thicket or shady place.

(iii) When Little John asks leave to set fire to a nunnery, Robin Hood replies :—

I never hurt fair maid in all my tyme,  
Nor at my end shall it be.

7. **The Refrain.**—A number of the older ballads had a refrain. This was a kind of burden or chorus, which occurred at regular intervals, and generally at the close of each stanza, but sometimes at the end of each line. It kept up the continuity, and reminded the audience of the *motif* and central core of the ballad; and the audience would now and then sing it along with the minstrel. Thus the verses of *Hynd Horn*<sup>1</sup> run in this way :—

Near the King's court was a young child born,  
With a hey lillie and a how lo lau;  
And his name it was called Young Hynd Horn,  
And the birk and the broom blooms bonnie.

And *The Twa Sisters of Binnorie* runs :—

The youngest stood upon a stane,  
(Binnorie, O Binnorie !)  
The eldest cam and pushed her in,  
By the bonny mill-dams o' Binnorie.

Modern ballad writers, like Rossetti, have revived this custom.

8. **How the Ballad and the Minstrel disappeared.**—It was printing and the spread of printing that slowly displaced the ballad. The courtly minstrel had become a professional stroller; and he was, in no long time, classified by the law as a tramp, a vagabond, a sturdy beggar, and possibly a rogue. The old songs and ballads which had been handed down from one generation to another by tradition were, as soon as printing had become cheap and common in England, put into type, and sold in the form of broadsheets printed on whitey-brown paper. The readers for the press—poor scholars and others—edited them, and in many cases spoiled their spirit, vigour, and gaiety, in modernising and trying to make them edifying. In such instances the songs and ballads became, in fact, “dull, long-drawn, and didactic.” The old ballads came straight from the heart and lips of the people; they were now filled with second-hand literary phrases, and had lost their old

<sup>1</sup> Hynd = gentle, courteous. The ballad of *Hynd Horn* is said to belong to the reign of Edward II.



fire. And the writing of these men often degenerated into dull doggerel like this (the "poet" is speaking of Queen Elizabeth at Tilbury):—

Upon the drum-head sitting  
As it was well befitting,  
For such a Royal Princess thus to speak:  
"A Soldier I will live and die,  
Fear shall never make me fly,  
Nor any danger leave to undertake."

### THE SCOTTISH POETS OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

1. **The Scottish Language.**—There exists in the minds of many people an error concerning the nature and origin of the language which is generally called "Scotch." Some persons suppose that "Scotch" is an independent and separate language, like Spanish or Italian, and without any connection with English; others think that it is a Celtic tongue, like Gaelic or Manx or Welsh. Both of these views are entirely erroneous. "Scotch" or "Scots" is merely the popular name for a dialect of English spoken in the northern part of Great Britain—or, in fact, Northern English. The literary language of a nation is simply a selection from the spoken language; and the spoken language varies in different districts of the country in which it is used. There are different ways of opening the mouth, different ways of employing the lips, teeth, and throat in the speech of different parts of this island; and these various ways of using the organs of speech give rise to different modes of speaking the language, and these different modes are called "dialects." Now the "Scotch" or Northern English dialect differs from the dialects used in the South in many ways; but it will be sufficient here if two or three divergences are pointed out—in the use of consonants, and in the use of vowels. Scotch, like Danish, prefers the hard sound of *k* to the softer *ch*; it says *kirk* for *church*, and *bank* for *bench*. In vowels, it prefers an *a* to an *o*. Thus Scotch says *gane* for *gone*; *ane* for *one*; *bane* for *bone*. In addition to these peculiarities of pronunciation, Scotch possesses a number of words that English—or, at



least, literary English—does not now possess. Thus it says *wee* for “little”; *bonnie* for “pretty”; a *goupin* for a “handful”; and so on. And this form of English has continued to live and thrive in the country parts of Scotland and in the North of England (Northumberland and Yorkshire) to the present day. Many fine and even noble poems have been written in the Scottish dialect; and the first employer of it in worthy verse is a Scottish king—James I., while the last is Robert Burns.

(i) Indeed, if we except the latter, we may limit Scottish literature to a period of somewhat more than a century and a half; that is to say, from Barbour's *Bruce*, completed in 1378, to Lyndesay's *Monarch*, written in 1553.

(ii) “The more genuine successors of Chaucer were the Scotch poets.”—JOHN NICHOL.

(iii) “Scottish literature properly speaking, that is to say, the literature which was not only written in Scotland and by Scotchmen, but which embodies local ideas in local language, stretches over somewhat more than 150 years.”—*Ibid.*

2. **King James I. (1394—1436).**—The pathetic history of King James I. of Scotland is well known. Brother of that Duke of Rothesay who was starved to death by his uncle—as narrated in Scott's great romance, *The Fair Maid of Perth*—he was sent to France by his father, but was captured on his voyage thither by an English vessel, and held for eighteen years as a State prisoner, first in the Tower of London, and then in the Round Tower of Windsor. He was not, however, treated harshly or meanly; on the contrary, he was provided with the best instructors, and was encouraged to study the best models in art and literature. He became especially fond of Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, whom he calls his three “masters.” He wrote in his captivity his poem of *The King's Quair* (King's Book), in honour of Lady Joanna Beaufort, whom he eventually married, only to perish thirteen years later by the hands of assassins in the castle of Perth, his death forming the subject of D. G. Rossetti's poem, *The King's Tragedy*. *The King's Quair* shows distinct evidence of the influence of Chaucer, and through this poem that influence produced in Scotland the principal poetic group of the later fifteenth and earlier sixteenth centuries. The metre of the poem has been styled from

its author the "rime-royal," and consists of seven-line stanzas. The description of the garden and of the young lady is full of freshness and music:—

Now was there maid, fast by the touris wall,  
A gardyn faire and in the corneris set  
Ane herbere<sup>1</sup> grene, with wandis long and small  
Railit about; and so with treis set  
Was all the place, and hawthorn hegis knet,  
That lyf was non walking there forby,  
That myght within scarce ony wight aspye.

So thick the bewis<sup>2</sup> and the leues grene  
Beschadit all the aleyes that there were,  
And myddis of euery herbere myght be sene  
The scharpe grene suete ienepere,<sup>3</sup>  
Growing so fair with branchis here and there,  
That, as it semyt to a lyf without,  
The bewis spred the herbere all about. . . .

Off hir array the form gif I sall write,  
Toward hir goldin haire and rich atyre  
In fret-wise couchit was with perllis quhite<sup>4</sup>  
And great balas lemyng<sup>5</sup> as the fyre,  
With mony ane emeraut<sup>6</sup> and faire saphire;  
And on hir hede a ch: p'et fresch of hewe,  
Off plumys partit rede, and quhite and blewe.

In hir was youth, beautee, with humble apert,  
Bountee, richesse, and wommanly facture,<sup>7</sup>  
God better wote than my pen can report:  
Wisedome, largesse, estate, and connyng<sup>8</sup> sure  
In every poynt so guydit hir mesure,  
In word, in dede, in schap, in countenance,  
That nature myght no more hir childe auance!

James I. is also said to be the author of a sprightly poem in an irregular stanza, called *Christ's Kirk on the Green*.

Another poem usually ascribed to King James I. is that known as *Peebles to the Play*, which describes the Beltane<sup>9</sup> Festival, held in Sectland on old May Day. Professor Skeat and other authorities consider that neither of these is the work of James I., but that they date from about the beginning of the sixteenth century.

<sup>1</sup> arbour.

<sup>2</sup> juniper.

<sup>3</sup> rubies gleaming.

<sup>7</sup> shape.

<sup>2</sup> boughs.

<sup>4</sup> pearls white.

<sup>6</sup> emerald.

<sup>8</sup> knowledge.

<sup>9</sup> Beltane, properly Beil-tine = Bel's fire, a festival observed by many Celtic races at the time of the sun's solstice.

3. **Blind Harry, or Henry the Minstrel** (*circa* 1450—1492).—The work of the royal “maker”—“the best king who ever was a poet, and the best poet who ever was a king”—called forth no immediate followers. The interval between James I. and William Dunbar is partly bridged by the work of an almost nameless poet, known only as Blind Harry, or Henry the Minstrel. In several respects he may be termed the Scottish Homer. Like his Grecian prototype, he seems to have been a rhapsodist, who wandered about chanting his vigorous stanzas to the nobles and to the people, and magnifying the deeds of battle of the national patriot-hero, William Wallace. He calls himself a rustic; but he was evidently a man of education, with some knowledge of French, and apparently some acquaintance with Latin. *The Wallace*, modelled on *The Bruce* of John Barbour, is a poem of some 12,000 lines, in heroic couplets. From it Burns learned patriotism, and on its history Sir Walter Scott drew largely in his *Tales of a Grandfather*. Some critics have preferred it to Barbour’s work, but though the verse is smooth, it lacks variety, and the exploits of the hero tend to monotony.

4. **Robert Henryson** (1430—1500), “the charming fabulist, Chaucer’s aptest and brightest scholar,” was a schoolmaster and notary public in Dunfermline, in the county of Fife. He wrote *The Testament of Cresseid*—a kind of sequel to Chaucer’s *Troilus and Cressida*—*The Tale of Orpheus*, *The Bloody Sark*, *Robin and Makyne*, the first pastoral poem written in the English language, and metrical versions of the *Fables* of Aesop. He tells us how he began his first poem. It was a bitterly cold night, a north wind was blowing:—

I mend<sup>1</sup> the fyre, and beikit<sup>2</sup> me about,  
 Than<sup>3</sup> tuik ane drink my spreitis<sup>4</sup> to comfort  
 And armit me weil<sup>5</sup> fra the cauld thairout;  
 To cut the winter nicht and mak it schort,  
 I tuik ane quair,<sup>6</sup> and left all other sport,  
 Written by worthy Chaucer glorious  
 Of fair Cresseid and lusty Troilus.

In his version of Aesop’s *Fables*, he gives the poem of *The Uponlandes Mous and the Burgess Mous* (The Country Mouse and the Town Mouse), which has been told by many poets (Prior

<sup>1</sup> mended.    <sup>2</sup> bustled.    <sup>3</sup> then.    <sup>4</sup> spirits.    <sup>5</sup> well.    <sup>6</sup> book.

among the rest), but never so well, so humorously, or so brightly as by Henryson. Among many other fables he gives us *The Lion and the Mouse*, *The Wolf and the Lamb*, *The Puddock* (Frog) and *the Mouse*, and many others.

Henryson's *Fables* run on with ease, charm, and quaint humour—humour not surpassed by the French fabulist La Fontaine, who is universally regarded as the prince of fable-writers.

(i) The following lines come at the conclusion of Henryson's *Country Mouse and Town Mouse* :—

Blissit be sempill lyfe withouten dreid !  
 Blissit be sober feist in quietie !  
 Quha hes aneugh,<sup>1</sup> of na mair hes he neid,  
 Thocht<sup>2</sup> it be lytill in to quantitie.

(ii) The prologue to the *Morall Fables* consists of the usual dream, in which "Maister Aesope, poet laureate," appears, tells Henryson that he (Aesop) is of gentle blood, and that his "natal land is Rome withouten nay." (But Aesop was a Greek fabulist of the sixth century B.C. He is generally spoken of as a dwarf and a slave.)

5. **William Dunbar** (1460—1513?) is, with the exception of Burns, the greatest poet that Scotland has produced, and certainly the most important and most original writer between Chaucer and Spenser. From his infancy he was intended for the Church; and his nurse used to call him the "little bishop." He was born in East Lothian (Haddingtonshire), educated at St. Salvator's College—then the only college in the University of St. Andrews, as St. Andrews was then the only University in Scotland, and graduated Master of Arts in the year 1479. He joined the Grey or Franciscan Friars as a novice; and, as a mendicant friar, he tramped from Berwick to Canterbury and Dover, and travelled over-sea to Calais and through Picardy, begging all the way and preaching as he went. He did not like the life, did not complete his novitiate, and does not seem to have taken the vows of the Order. But his wandering life brought him face to face with remarkable persons and remarkable experiences; and his watchful eyes picked out many a scene and character that served him in good stead when he came to make poetry. He left his Order before he was thirty, and seems to have entered the diplomatic service of the Royal Court of Scotland as a secretary to different embassies. In this capacity he travelled

<sup>1</sup> enough.

<sup>2</sup> though.



in Germany, Italy, France, and Spain; and of course he visited London:—

London, which art the flower of cities all.

Towards the close of the fifteenth century he settled in Edinburgh, and was attached to the Court. In the year 1500 James IV. conferred on him a yearly pension of £10,<sup>1</sup> which was gradually raised to £80. Dunbar was, in fact, Court Poet, or Laureate, and was known in England as "The Rimer of Scotland." In 1501 he was a member of the embassy sent to London to negotiate the marriage of James IV. with Margaret Tudor, the daughter of Henry VII. The wedding took place in Holyrood Palace (in Edinburgh) in the year 1503; and Dunbar composed in its honour his fine poem of *The Thrissill and the Rois* (the Thistle and the Rose). The young Queen became his firm friend and kind patron. Dunbar remained at Holyrood till the fateful year of 1513, when James IV. marched out of Edinburgh to Flodden. It has been surmised that the poet was one of "the dark impenetrable ring"—one of

the Scottish circle deep  
That fought around their King,

and fell on the field—

Where shivered was fair Scotland's spear  
And broken was her shield.

But if a poem, alleged to be in his hand, and referring to the return of the Duke of Albany to France in 1517, be indeed his composition, this supposition is untenable. We know from an allusion in Lyndesay's *Papingo* that he was dead in 1530. At any rate, from 1517 Dunbar disappeared; and, still more strangely, his poems disappeared also, and were not discovered till about two hundred years after.

It was the marriage of Margaret Tudor that brought about the Union of the two Crowns of England and Scotland; and this Union took place one hundred years after the marriage in the person of James VI. of Scotland and I. of England. James VI. was the great-grandson of Margaret Tudor.

---

<sup>1</sup> This was, of course, £10 Scots = 16s. 8d.; but it had a purchasing power of ten times its present value.



6. **Dunbar's Poems.**—His best known poems are *The Thrissill and the Rois*, *The Goldyn Terge* (Shield), *The Lament for the Makars* (Poets), and *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Synnis* (Sins). The last is generally regarded as his masterpiece; the first is the most beautiful, and is written in rime-royal. In *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Synnis* there is great vigour and picturesqueness; the vigour often degenerates into coarseness, but throughout his work there is not only force, but grace, variety, humour, and a keen observation of human nature. The influence of Chaucer is visible in most of his poetry—the influence, too, of Chaucer's pupil, James I.—and his command over metre rises to the level of Chaucer's. He now and then employs a short stanza of four lines, with a refrain in English or Latin. This is done in *The Lament for the Makars*:—

In Dunfermelyne he has ta'en Brown  
With Maister Robert Henrisoun;  
Sir John the Ross embraced has he,  
*Timor Mortis conturbat me.*  
(The Fear of Death it troubles me.)

The following is an extract from *The Thrissill and the Rois*:—

Quhen Merch wes with variand windis past,  
And Appryll hed, with hir silver schouris  
Tane leif at Nature with ane orient blast,  
And lusty May, that muddir is of flouris,  
Had maid the birdis to begyn thair houris<sup>1</sup>  
Amang the tendir odouris reid and quhyt,  
Quhois armony to heir it wes delyt.  
In bed at morrow, sleiping as I lay,  
Methocht Aurora, with hir cristall ene  
In at the window lukit by the day,  
And halsit<sup>2</sup> me, with visage pail and grene;  
On quhois hand a lark sang fro the splene,<sup>3</sup>  
“Awalk, luvaris, out of your slomereng  
Se hou the lusty morrow dois up-spring.”  
Methocht, fresche May befoir my bed up-stude,  
In weid<sup>4</sup> depaynt of mony divers hew,  
Sober, benyng, and full of mansuetude,  
In brycht atteir of flouris forgit new,  
Hevinly of color, quhyt, reid, broun and blew,  
Balmit in dew, and gilt with Phebus bemys;  
Quhill all the houss illumynit of hir lemys.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> orisons.

<sup>2</sup> with sudden fervour, rapidly.

<sup>3</sup> saluted.

<sup>4</sup> garment.

<sup>5</sup> rays, gleams.

(i) *The Goldyn Terge* and some of the minor poems were first printed in Edinburgh by Chapman & Millar in 1508. (These were the first printers in Scotland; the first English press was Caxton's, set up in 1474.)

(ii) Dunbar says of Chaucer:—

O reverend Chaucere, rose of réthoris all,  
As in oure tong ane flour imperial  
Surmounting eviry tongue terrestriall  
Alls far as Mayes morow does mydnycht. 2

7. **Gawain Douglas** (1474—1522) was a younger son of that Earl of Angus who was generally known as "Bell the Cat." Even the upper classes in Scotland in the fifteenth century were unable to read and write; and Scott makes the Earl of Angus say:—

Thanks to St. Bothan, son of mine,  
Save Gawain, ne'er could pen a line.

But Gawain, or Gavin, was a studious youth, entered the University of St. Andrews (where so many famous Scotsmen have studied), and took his degree of M.A. there in 1494. Having entered the Church, he became Provost of St. Giles, Edinburgh, Abbot of Aberbrothock (Arbroath), and Bishop of Dunkeld. In the course of the disputes and contests between the different ecclesiastical and political parties, he was obliged to take refuge in England: he made his way to London, where he died of the plague in 1522. His three chief works are *The Palace of Honour*, *King Heart*, and a translation of the *Aeneid*. The two first are allegorical poems, and, as in all the poems of that kind produced in England for three hundred years (from the twelfth century onwards), the poet falls asleep in a garden on a May morning, has a dream, sees certain gods and goddesses, and so on. *King Heart* is the story of the conflict between the flesh and the spirit, and is not unlike Bunyan's *Holy War*. It is his translation of the *Aeneid* (written in 1512-13) for which Douglas is most famed; and his version shows a real power of versification, and a strong sense of melody in his measures. Each book of the *Aeneid* is introduced by an original poem by way of prologue; and it is in these prologues that Douglas shows his highest poetical powers. The following lines are from the prologue to the Twelfth Book:—

Welcum the lord of lycht and lamp of day,  
 Welcum fostyr of tendir herbys grene,  
 Welcum quyknar of floryst flowris scheyn,  
 Welcum support of every rute and vayn,  
 Welcum confort of alkynd fruyt and grayn,  
 Welcum the byrdis beild<sup>1</sup> apone the brer,  
 Welcum mayster and rewlar of the yer. . . .  
 Welcum depayntar of the blomyt<sup>2</sup> medis,  
 Welcum the lyfe of every thyng that spredis,  
 Welcum storour of alkynd bestiall,<sup>3</sup>  
 Welcum be thy brycht bemys, gladyng all.

(i) At a meeting in 1482 of the Scots nobles to conspire against the King's favourite, the Earl of Mar, Lord Gray told the story of the assembly of the mice, one of whom proposed to have a bell hung round the neck of the cat, so that they might have some warning of her approach, and then asked, "Who will bell the cat?" The reply of the Earl of Angus was, "I will bell the cat." And from that time he was always spoken of by this name.

(ii) The translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* by Douglas into heroic couplets was the first version of any Latin classic made into English. Douglas employs, of course, the northern dialect of English; but still it is good English; and he calls it "our Inglis." The following four lines are a fair specimen of the smoothness of the verse:—

For to behold it was a gloir to see,  
 The stabylit<sup>4</sup> windis and the calmit sea,  
 The soft seisoün, the firmament serene,  
 The lowne<sup>5</sup> illumynat air and fyrth amene.<sup>6</sup>

8. **Dávid Lyndsay, or Lyndesay** (1490—1558).—Sir David Lyndesay of the Mount was born at the paternal seat of the Mount in Monimail, near Cupar, in Fife. He went to school at Cupar, and proceeded to the College of St. Salvator in the University of St. Andrews, where he was a student in 1508. After leaving college he entered the service of the Royal Court of James IV. in Edinburgh; and in 1513 was present with that monarch in the chapel at Linlithgow, when the supposed apparition came to warn the King against the expedition which ended in the disaster of Flodden. He was Master Usher, or Master of the Household, to James V. from his infancy. The young King and he were great friends.

<sup>1</sup> *beild* = shelter.

<sup>2</sup> *blomyt* (bloomed) = full of blooms or flowers.

<sup>3</sup> *alkynd bestiall* = all kinds of beasts.

<sup>4</sup> *stabylit* = made quiet.

<sup>5</sup> *lowne* = serene.

<sup>6</sup> *amene* = pleasant.

Quhen thou wes young, I bure the in myne arme,  
 Full tenderlye till thow begouth<sup>1</sup> to gang;  
 And in thy bed oft happit<sup>2</sup> the full warme  
 With lute in hand syne<sup>3</sup> softlye to the sang.

And, in one of his poems, called *The Complaynt*, he reminds the King, now with the reins of State :—

Quhow as ane chapman beris his pak  
 I bure thy grace upon my bak,  
 And sumtymes strydingis on my nek,  
 Dansand with mony bend and bek :  
 The first sillabis that thow did mute  
 Was "pa-Da-Lyn." Upon the lute  
 Than playit I twenty spryngis perqueir  
 Quhilk was gret pieté for to heir.  
 Fra play thow leit me never rest,  
 Bot "Gynkartoun" thow lufit ay best ;  
 And ay, quhen thow come frome the scule  
 Than I behuffit to play the fule.

(i) *Chapman*, travelling merchant ; the same root is found in *Cheap* (a market). *Strydingis* = astride. *Dansand* = dancing ; *and* was the old ending for the present participle in the North of Britain ; *end* in the Midlands ; and *ind* in the South of England. (*Bydand*, waiting, is the motto of the Gordon Highlanders.) *Mute* = articulate ; cf. mutter. *Pa*, child's equivalent for play ; *Da*, for David ; and *Lyn*, for Lyndesay. *Spryngis* = dances or tunes. *Perqueir* (= per coeur), by heart, without book. *Quhilk* = which.

(ii) The guttural indicated in English by the letters *wh*, formerly written *hw*, has largely disappeared from the speech of Southern England ; but not so in Scotland and in Ireland. It is represented in Old Northern English (or Scotch) by the form *Quh* as above.

In 1530, Lyndesay was knighted and appointed Lord Lyon King-at-Arms, that is, he was made principal Court Herald ; and in that capacity he served in several foreign embassies. Lyndesay's chief poems are *The Dream* ; *The Testament and Complaint of our Sovereign Lord's Papingo* (Parrot) ; and *Ane Satyre of the Three Estates*. His poems are mostly allegories, with the usual imagery, the usual personages, the usual machinery. He was a reformer before the Reformation, and, like Langland, declaims powerfully against the corruptions of the Church and the wealth and self-indulgence of the rich. His style is incisive, vigorous, but undefined (he himself

<sup>1</sup> *begouth* = beganst.    <sup>2</sup> *happit* = wrapped.    <sup>3</sup> *syne* = then.

calls it "raggit rural verse"); and he employs too many "aureate" terms. He praises Chaucer—

Whose sweet sentence through Albion is sung.

He died in 1558.

(i) *Ane Satyre of the Three Estates* is a kind of Morality Play (see p. 84). It was acted at Cupar, Fife, and the performance took nine hours. This is not to be wondered at in a time when there were no books (or very expensive ones), no reviews, no magazines, no newspapers, and when very few could read. Sermons in those days lasted three hours or more.

(ii) *Aureate* (gilded) was the term applied to Latinised epithets, which were introduced as mere ornaments, as—

I wyll nocht flyte<sup>1</sup>, that I conclude,  
For crabbing<sup>2</sup> of thy Celsitude (Highness).

(iii) Scott (in his *Marmion*, canto iv. 7) says of Lyndesay:—

Still is thy name in high account  
And still thy verse has charms,  
Sir David Lyndesay of the Mount,  
Lord Lyon King-at-Arms.

<sup>1</sup> scold or dispute.

<sup>2</sup> provoking.



## CHAPTER VI.

---

### PROSE WRITERS FROM THE FIFTEENTH TO THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

1. **Introduction.**—If we examine the development of English Prose from the time of Sir Thomas Malory's book, *The Morte d'Arthur* (1470), to the publication of Bacon's *Essays* in 1597, we shall see a gradual change from somewhat loose, narrative, and even garrulous sentences to the short, clear, pithy, and highly polished periods of the famous *Essays*. The power of expression grows with each century, almost with each generation; and the language, as it grows, gains ever new faculties and facilities, becomes more and more clear and modern, and gets rid of its clumsy and helpless pedantries and obscure phraseology.

At the head of the chief prose writers of this period stands **Sir Thomas Malory**, who finished his *Morte d'Arthur* in 1470 (Caxton printed it in 1485), and whose book was much the most popular book in the latter end of the fifteenth century. Its thoroughly idiomatic English made it pleasant to read, while its wonderful stories entranced the heart of the nation. **William Caxton**, the first English printer, was much more than that—he was a translator and writer who has made his mark in our literature. His distinction rests on two different grounds: one positive, the other negative. The positive merit is that he imitated French models, and gained from them a clearness and a grace he could not otherwise have attained. He speaks of French prose as “so well and compendiously set and written,” and thus escaped “the rude speech and incongruous” of his native Kent. The negative merit is his exclusion from style of all dialect—especially that of the

Weald, "where, I doubt not, is spoken as broad and rude English as in any part of England." To **Sir Thomas More** is due the high distinction of having been the first to write good historical prose. He has been called the "Father of English Prose," but this is a phrase which, as we have pointed out, is misleading. He avoided pedantry on the one side, and vulgarisms on the other; he aimed at a prose that was both pure and perspicuous, and he succeeded in attaining it. **Lord Berners** carries on the fair tradition, and he comes in aid of the less learned style of Caxton. Himself a soldier, courtier, scholar, councillor, mixing on equal terms with great generals and statesmen of all the chief countries in Europe, he was the very man to translate Froissart's *Chronicles*. This noble French work inspired Berners with its own grace, energy, verve, and simplicity; and the English language is all the richer that it possesses a strong and idiomatic translation of the famous *Chronicles*. **Bishop Latimer** introduced into English style the conversational element. His is a speaking, even a talking style; and his short sentences are full of life. He is sometimes as personal and autobiographical as Montaigne<sup>1</sup> himself. **John Foxe** is a forerunner of the homeliness and simplicity of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and his *Book of Martyrs* influenced English style and feeling nearly as much as the translation of the Bible itself. He is as full of detail as Defoe; he is nearly as garrulous as Mrs. Nickleby. He put down things as they came into his head, and cared little for polish. "I cannot," he says, "sit all the day fining and mincing my letters, and combing my head and smoothing myself at the glass of Cicero." Reality—that was what he aimed at; and he often arrived at Realism. A similar spirit influenced **Roger Ascham**, tutor to Queen Elizabeth and author of *The Scholemaster* and *Toxophilus*. Indeed, he anticipated Wordsworth in quoting the maxim of Aristotle, "To speak as the common people do, to think as wise men do," and advocates the disuse of words of foreign origin. His own style was, says Professor Craik, "not only clear and correct, but idiomatic and muscular." **John Lyly**, with his *Euphues* (1579-80), was a striking contrast as a writer to Foxe and Ascham: he *did* "comb his head

<sup>1</sup> Michel Montaigne (1533—1592) is celebrated for his *Essays*, one of the most popular books in the French language.

and smooth himself at the glass of Cicero" and other Latin writers. The peculiar quality of his style is the balance of phrases; and his sentences generally consist of phrases in pairs. **John Knox**, of Scotland, wrote in a very different style; his prose is homely, even coarse, full of vivid details, and modelled, it is said, "on the Book of the Acts of the Apostles." Dialogues and dramatic touches break the denunciatory monotony of his preaching and invective; but he is too uniformly wrathful. **Robert Greene**, hereafter to be noticed as a dramatist, is also the author of one of the earliest English novels, in a style inspired by Lyly. **Sir Walter Raleigh** was a man of the broadest culture, social as well as literary; and few English writers have had half his experiences. In his prose he freed himself from the elaboration and the "conceits" of the Euphuists. In his *Discovery of Guiana* (1595) he makes "the most brilliant and original contribution to the literature of travel" made during the reign of Elizabeth; and in his *History of the World* (begun in 1607) he shows a dignity and sustained power unequalled by other prose works of the time. His great defect is the enormous length of his sentences, some of which contain from one hundred and thirty to two hundred words. **Richard Hooker** was also given to very long and over-laboured sentences. But their parts are well balanced, and their rhetoric conforms to all the laws of academic writing. In fact, *academical* is the most fitting epithet to be found for his prose. His illustrations are taken, not from nature, but from books.

2. **Sir Thomas Malory** (1430—1480).—Very little is known of the life of Malory, except the important fact that he wrote the *Morte d'Arthur*. This famous book is an adaptation of the old French romances relating to King Arthur, the mythical hero alike of Brittany and of Britain. The cycle of romances, dealt with therein, forms an epic on the life and death of the King and the deeds of the Knights of the Round Table, and might be called the Arthuriad. The book was finished in 1470, and printed by Caxton in 1485. This great printer says that he, "after the simple cunning that God hath sent him, empris'd to imprint a book of the noble histories of the said King Arthur." It is the most complete collection of the Arthurian romances in existence, written

in idiomatic English and in a style of narrative directness, natural charm, and manly simplicity. It was the most popular book of the sixteenth century, and has been a storehouse whence many English writers have drawn their materials. The following is a fair specimen of Malory's style:—

HOW ARTHUR BY THE MEAN OF MERLIN GAT EXCALIBUR HIS SWORD OF  
THE LADY OF THE LAKE.

Right so the King and he departed, and went until an hermit that was a good man and a great leach. So the hermit searched all his wounds and gave him good salves; so the King was there three days, and then were his wounds well amended that he might ride and go, and so departed. And as they rode, Arthur said, I have no sword. No force, said Merlin, hereby is a sword that shall be yours an I may. So they rode till they came to a lake, the which was a fair water and broad, and in the midst of the lake Arthur was ware of an arm clothed in white samite, that held a fair sword in that hand. Lo, said Merlin, yonder is that sword I spake of. With that they saw a damsel going upon the lake: What damsel is that? said Arthur. That is the Lady of the Lake, said Merlin; and within that lake is a rock, and therein is as fair a place as any on earth, and richly beseen, and this damsel will come to you anon, and then speak ye fair to her that she will give you that sword. Anon withal came the damsel unto Arthur and saluted him, and he her again. Damsel, said Arthur, what sword is that, that yonder the arm holdeth above the water? I would it were mine, for I have no sword. Sir Arthur King, said the damsel, that sword is mine, and if ye will give me a gift when I ask it you, ye shall have it. By my faith, said Arthur, I will give you what gift ye will ask. Well, said the damsel, go ye into yonder barge and row yourself to the sword, and take it and the scabbard with you, and I will ask my gift when I see my time. So Sir Arthur and Merlin alight, and tied their horses to two trees, and so they went into the ship, and when they came to the sword that the hand held, Sir Arthur took it up by the handles, and took it with him. And the arm and the hand went under the water; and so they came into the land and rode forth. (From the *Globe* edition.)

(i) "This chronicler of Knighthood is himself a Knight. His heart is devoted to the chivalry he portrays, and his tongue is the faithful spokesman of his heart,"—PROFESSOR HALES.

(ii) Tennyson drew from this book the framework for the *Idylls of the King*. He has indeed sometimes simply run Malory's narrative into good blank verse: "What saw thou there? said the King. Sir, he said, I saw nothing but the waters wap and the waves wan. Ah, traitor untrue, now hast thou betrayed me twice. . . . But now go again lightly, for thy tarrying putteth me in great jeopardy of my life, for I have taken cold."

Compare Tennyson's *Morte d'Arthur*:—

What is it thou hast seen or what hast heard? . . .  
I heard the ripple washing in the reeds  
And the wild water lapping on the crag. . . .  
Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,



Unknightly, traitor-hearted ! Woe is me ! . . .  
 Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word. . . .  
 . . . yet I fear  
 My wound hath taken cold and I shall die.

It is hardly necessary to mention **Reginald Pecock** (a Welshman who became Provost of Oriel College and afterwards Bishop of Chichester, but was deprived of his bishopric for heresy), the author of *The Repressour of overmuch Blaming of the Clergy*. He was an acute and ingenious reasoner, and his style shows marks of this acuteness.

3. A much greater and better man was **William Caxton** (1415—1491), in many ways a most significant figure in the history of English Literature. Born in Kent, he was sent as boy to be apprenticed to Robert Large, a London mercer, and Lord Mayor in 1439-40. After his master's death he went to Bruges and settled there as a mercer; he was so successful that in 1465 he was appointed President of the English Association of Merchant Adventurers. Some of his leisure he gave to literature, and spent his time happily in translating the *Recueil des Histoires de Troye* (1471). There was so eager a demand for this book, and Caxton's eyes were "so dimmed with overmuch looking on the white paper," and his hand "so weary and not stedfast" that he turned to the new invention of wooden movable types—"black letter"<sup>1</sup>—and set himself to study and to learn the art of printing. His translation of the *Recueil* was the first English book ever printed, and it probably appeared in 1474. In 1475 he translated and printed *The Game and Playe of Chesse*, and this is the second printed English book. He left the Low Countries in 1476 and set up his press at the Almonry, in the Broad Sanctuary of Westminster; and here he produced the first English book printed in England, the *Dictes and Sayengis of the Philosophers*, a translation from the French made by Anthony Woodville, Lord Rivers.<sup>2</sup> From this time he spent his life in

<sup>1</sup> *Black Letter* is simply a very black and heavy style of printing Gothic, or, as it is also called, German. Many of the best German printers, however, now use our Roman type.

<sup>2</sup> Earl Rivers (Anthony Woodville) was one of the chief patrons of the new art of printing. He was a personal friend of Edward IV., who married his sister, Elizabeth Woodville. He was beheaded by Richard III.



translating and printing, and he translated twenty-one books with his own hand. Wealthy persons who possessed books lent him their copies to print from; and he may be said with accuracy to have printed all the English classics then in existence—the works of Chaucer and Gower, the *Morte d'Arthur*, the *Lives of the Saints*, and the story of *Reynard the Fox*. His translations are free and courageous paraphrases of their originals—written in a style that is clear, facile, idiomatic, virile, and graceful. The following passage contains an interesting tribute to Chaucer:—

Grete thanks, lawde and honour ought to be gyven unto the clerkes, poetes, and historiographs, that have wreton many noble bokes of wysedom, of the lyves, passions, and myracles of holy sayntes . . . of whom we shold not have knowen yf they had not left to us theyr monuments wreton. Among whom and in especial to-fore alle other we ought to gyve a singular laude unto that noble and grete philosopher Gefierey Chaucer, the which for his ornate wrytyng in our tongue maye well have the name of a laureate poete. For to-fore that he by hys labour embelysshed, ornated, and made faire our Englishe, in this royaume was had rude speech and incongrue, as yet it appiereth, by olde bookes, whyche at this day ought not to have place ne be compared among ne to hys beauteous volumes and aournate<sup>1</sup> wrytynges.

4. **Sir Thomas More** (1478—1535) was born in Cheapside, London—the son of Sir John More, a judge in the Court of King's Bench. At thirteen he entered the household of Thomas Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury, and was then sent to Oxford, where he was seized with an infectious ardour for the new study of Greek. Afterwards he became a member of New Inn and of Lincoln's Inn. He made the acquaintance, in 1498, of the great Dutch scholar Erasmus, and a life-long friendship, maintained by regular correspondence, was the result. The year 1504 saw him in Parliament, as member for a division of London, in which capacity he opposed a money grant, and earned the royal displeasure of Henry VII. In the summer of 1520 he attended Henry VIII. at the "Field of the Cloth of Gold" in Picardy. He rose through office after office—the Speakership of the House of Commons, the Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster, and others—to be at length, on the fall of Wolsey in 1529, Lord High Chancellor of the kingdom. In the year 1532 he foresaw difficulties and dangers

<sup>1</sup> ornate.

in connection with the question of divorcing Queen Katharine, resigned his office, and retired into the country. He had hoped to be forgotten; but his royal master induced Parliament to call on all past and present holders of office to take an oath of adherence to the Act declaring Queen Katharine's marriage illegal, and the headship of the Pope annulled. *More* would accept neither declaration, and refused to take the oath; and he was beheaded on July 6th, 1535. His most famous work, written in Latin, is *Utopia*, published in 1516, and translated into English in 1551; and his chief English book is his *History of Edward V. and Richard III.*, written in 1513, but not published till 1543. In his *Utopia*, *More*, under the guise of a traveller's story—the story of a man who had made several voyages abroad—sketches a series of reforms of which England stood greatly in need. In his *History of Richard III.* he gives to England, according to one critic, the first specimen of “good historical English prose.”

(i) *Inn*.—An “Inn of Court” is the place of residence of the legal societies of barristers. There are in London four: the Inner Temple; the Middle Temple; Lincoln's Inn; and Gray's Inn. The two first were the residence of the old Knights Templars; and hence they preserve the name of “The Temple.”

(ii) Erasmus was the most celebrated scholar of the sixteenth century. He was a friend of *More*, of Dean Colet (who founded St. Paul's School), and of other distinguished men of the New Learning. He published a delightful set of *Conversations* (Colloquia), a *Praise of Folly*—both in Latin; he edited the Greek Testament, and wrote a Latin translation of it. He refused a Cardinal's hat.

(iii) Thomas *More* was beatified in 1886 by Pope Leo XIII. The reward came somewhat late.

(iv) *Utopia* = Nowhere (cf. *News from Nowhere* of William Morris), comes from the two Greek words οὐ (not) and τόπος (a place). *More* makes it the name of an imaginary island, in the far West, where the laws, the administration of them, and the executive are all ideally perfect. Hence the adjective *utopian* is now applied to ideal schemes which cannot be put into practice.

(v) “*More's* prose is the first example of good English language: pure and perspicuous, well chosen, without vulgarisms and pedantry. . . . His *History* is the first book I have read through without detecting any remnant of obsolete forms.”—HALLAM.

5. **John Bouchier, Lord Berners** (1467—1533), was a descendant of the Plantagenets, a courtier, a soldier, and a knight, and one of the chief supporters, both in peace and war, of the Earl of

Richmond, afterwards Henry VII. It was a relation of his, Cardinal Bouchier, who crowned the King at Westminster. He served under his friend the Earl of Surrey in Scotland, and was present at the English victory of Flodden Field; he was employed on several embassies; and he rose, in 1515, to be Chancellor of the Exchequer. In the year 1520 he was appointed Governor of Calais, where he died. His place in English literature is due to his translation of Froissart's *Chronicle*. The translation is vigorous, manly, living; and it has been frequently pointed to as a model of English style. The following is an example given in modern spelling:—

#### THE DEATH OF KING ROBERT THE BRUCE.

It fortun'd that King Robert of Scotland was right sore aged, and feeble; for he was greatly charged with the great sickness, so that there was no way with him but death; and when he felt that his end drew near, he sent for such barons and lords of his realm as he trusted best, and showed them how there was no remedy with him, but he must needs leave this transitory life. . . . And wheresoever ye come, let it be known, how ye carry with you the heart of King Robert of Scotland, at his instance and desire to be presented to the holy sepulchre. Then all the lords that heard these words, wept for pity. And when this knight, Sir James Douglas, might speak for weeping, he said, Ah, gentle and noble king, a hundred times I thank your grace of the great honour that ye do to me, sith of so noble and great treasure ye give me in charge; and, sir, I shall do with a glad heart all that ye have commanded me, to the best of my true power; how be it, I am not worthy nor sufficient to achieve such a noble enterprise. Then the King said, Ah, gentle knight, I thank you, so that ye will promise to do it. Sir, said the knight, I shall do it undoubtedly, by the faith that I owe to God, and to the order of knighthood. Then I thank you, said the King, for now I shall die in more ease of my mind, sith that I know that the most worthy and sufficient knight of my realm shall achieve for me, the which I could never attain unto.

(i) John Froissart (1337—1410) was invited to England by Queen Philippa of Hainault, the wife of Edward III. In 1365 he visited Scotland. His great work is the *Chronique de France, d'Angleterre, d'Ecosse*,

*et d'Espagne*, and covers the historic ground from 1332 till 1400. It was published before the close of the fifteenth century, and was thus among the few books printed very early.

(ii) Lord Berners also wrote a translation of Marcus Aurelius from a French version taken from the Spanish, which he called *The Golden Book of Marcus Aurelius*.

6. **The Chroniclers.**—From the earliest periods of English literature, history, so-called, seems to have engaged the attention of many writers, generally known as Chroniclers. From Bede and the unknown authors of *The Saxon Chronicle*, down to Caxton's continuation to his own time of the *Polychronicon* (see p. 38), a steady succession is to be found in which sober fact gradually begins to emerge from the shadow of myth and legend. We have seen the appearance of Lord Berners's translation of Froissart's great work. This was soon followed by **Robert Fabyan's Concordance of Histories**, first printed by Pynson in 1516; this was again continued (1542) in **Edward Hall's** history of the Wars of the Roses and of the reigns of the two first Tudor sovereigns (generally known as *Hall's Chronicle*), which Shakespeare followed in some of his historical plays.

7. **Hugh Latimer** (1491—1555) was born in Leicestershire, the son of a yeoman, who suffered from the growth of large sheep-farms, which required large capital and a new class of landlord. Latimer took his degree at Cambridge in 1510; became a priest, was made a royal chaplain in 1534, and Bishop of Worcester the year after. During the short reign of King Edward VI. he laboured hard for the Reformation. On Queen Mary's accession Latimer was a marked man. He was arrested and committed to the Tower in 1553; was sent down to Oxford, along with Ridley and Cranmer, to defend the new doctrines regarding the mass before the assembled divines of the two universities; and was burnt, with Ridley, on October 16th, 1555, outside the north wall of Oxford, "at the ditch over against Balliol College." His works consist of *Sermons*, which are written in a lively and homely style, free from pedantry of any kind, of a talkative and even garrulous character. His style is the antipodes of the classical, the periodic, the Latinised style. It is always simple, direct, fresh, and abounding in short phrases. Sometimes he



indulges in alliteration. He denounces lazy and "unpreaching prelates" as men who are "so placed in palaces, couched in courts, ruffling in their rents, dancing in their dominions, pampering <sup>feeding</sup> of their paunches, munching in their mangers, moiling in their <sup>belly</sup> gay manors and mansions, and loitering in their lordships." Such a style (the English of which has been modernised in the above extract) would not be tolerated nowadays: it possesses one of the worst qualities of a bad style—self-consciousness. The following, however, is a specimen of Latimer's writing in a plain, straightforward style:—

My father was a yoman, and had no landes of his owne, onlye he had a farme of iii or iiij pound by yere at the uttermost, and here upon he tilled so much as kepte halfe a dosen men. He had walke for a hundred shepe; and my mother mylked xxx kyne. He was able and did find the king a harnesse, with hym selfe, and hys horsses, whyles he came to ye place theat he should receyue the kynges wages. I can remembre yat I buckled hys harnes when he went unto Blacke heeath felde. He kept me to schole, or elles I had not bene able to haue preached before the kinges maiestie now. He maryed my systres with v pounce or xx nobles a peece, so that he broughte them vp in godlines, and feare of God.

*Latimer* is a corruption of the word *Latiner* (= translator or interpreter). "It signifies he that interprets Latin; and though he interpreted French, Spanish, or Italian, he was called the King's *Latiner*—that is, the King's Interpreter."—SELDEN.

8. **Roger Ascham** (1515—1568), a well-known writer on Archery and Education, and a fine classical scholar, was born at Kirby Wiske, near Northallerton, in Yorkshire. In 1530 he was entered at St. John's College, Cambridge, where he worked very hard at Greek, not only studying himself, but teaching younger students. Archery had been his passion from early youth; he wrote a book on it, styled *Toxophilus*, which he presented to Henry VIII. in 1545; and "he did so well like and allow it, as he gave me a living for it"; this was worth £10 a year, which had then the purchasing power of £100 at the present time. In 1531 he was made Fellow of St. John's, and was afterwards Reader (Lecturer) in Greek, and Public Orator of the University. In the year 1548 he became tutor to the Princess Elizabeth, who was an apt and zealous pupil, and read Greek several hours a day. His other book, *The Scholemaster*, was not published till after his



death. Ascham was a jealous lover of the English language, and although an excellent classical scholar, he preferred to employ homely words and phrases rather than the ornate and learned words—"inkhorn terms"—provided by Latin and Greek. In his *Toxophilus* he speaks of "writing this English matter in the English speech for Englishmen." Ascham's style has been called "the first accomplished plain style in English."

#### THE DECLINE OF ARCHERY.

Young children use not (shooting); young men, for fear of them whom they be under too much, dare not; sage men for other greater businesses, will not; aged men for lack of strength, can not; rich men for covetousness' sake, care not; poor men for cost and charge, may not; masters for their household keeping, heed not; servants kept in by their masters very oft, shall not; craftsmen for getting of their living, very much leisure have not; and many there be that oft begins, but for unaptness proves not; and most of all which when they be shooters give it over and list not; so that generally men everywhere for one or other consideration much shooting use not.

9. **John Foxe** (1516—1587) was born at Boston, in Lincolnshire, in the same year as Mary Tudor. He was educated at Brasenose College, Oxford, and elected Fellow of Magdalen in 1539. He resigned his fellowship in 1545; and in 1548 became tutor to the children of the Earl of Surrey (who had been executed the year before), a post which he held for five years. On the accession of Queen Mary he fled to the Continent, to avoid persecution, and lived during her reign chiefly at Frankfort and Bâle. At the latter place he was employed as Reader (or corrector for the press) in the printing office of John Oporinus, who published for him the first edition of his *Book of Martyrs*. Returning to England in 1559, the year after Mary died, he was ordained priest in 1560, and received a Prebend<sup>1</sup> in Salisbury Cathedral. The first edition of

<sup>1</sup> A *Prebend* was originally a portion of food and drink supplied; then it came to mean an ecclesiastical living. "When canons ceased to live in common, each canon received a share of the cathedral revenues, called a *Prebend*."

his famous work (1554) was in Latin; but in 1563 he issued a larger edition in English from the press of his friend John Day. Four editions, all in folio, were produced during Foxe's lifetime; and five more within the next two generations. The book represents one side of the strong, turbulent, intense life of the sixteenth century. Dedicated to Queen Elizabeth, it was ordered to be set up in all parish churches for the use of the people; and its influence was immense and incalculable. The author believed everything that was bad about his opponents, and credited his martyrs with the possession of every Christian virtue. The stories and scenes are thoroughly realistic; they are presented with the vividness of the drama; inquisitors, martyrs, spectators, are full of life and passion; and he spares his readers no horrible barbarity, no pathetic detail, until they are filled with pity and indignation, intensified by the very nature of his plain matter-of-fact style. His calmness, his sobriety, his earnestness and directness, stirred to their depths the feelings of the English Puritans.

(i) Oporinus's (= fruit-gatherer or reaper) real name was Johann Herbet. Learned men (a class which included printers) in the sixteenth century were in the habit of translating their native names into Greek or Latin, or both. Thus Gerhardt Gerhardt becomes Desiderius Erasmus; Schwarzerde is turned into Melancthon; and so on. But Luther refused to follow this fashion.

(ii) The full title of *The Book of Martyrs* is ten lines long: *Acts and Monuments of these Latter and Perilous Days, touching Matters of the Church*, etc.

/ 10. **The Later Chroniclers.**—The work of the early Chroniclers was combined and continued by **John Stow** (1525—1604), who published his *Summary of English Chronicles* in 1561. He is better known, however, by his *Survey of London*, published in 1598—a work of great value to the antiquary and historian. It is curious to note, as an early means of rewarding men of letters, that in 1604 he received authority from James I. to collect “amongst our loving subjects their voluntary contributions and kind gratuities.” His contemporary, **John Speed** (1542—1629), was author of a *History of Great Britain under the Conquests of the Romans, Saxons, Danes, and Normans*, which he continued to the reign of James I., and published in 1611.

The best-known writer of this group was undoubtedly **Raphael Holinshed** (d. about 1580), who produced, under the patronage of a printer named Wolfe, in whose service he worked for some years as translator, *Raphael Holingeshed's Cronycle*, from which Shakespeare derived the plots of *Cymbeline*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear*, as well as much of the materials for his English historical plays.

✓ 11. **John Lyly** (1553—1606), the author of *Euphues* and of the fashion called "Euphuism," was born in the Weald<sup>1</sup> of Kent. He entered Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1569, at the age of sixteen. In the spring of 1579 he published his *Euphues; or, the Anatomy of Wit*; this volume was followed in 1580 by *Euphues and his England*. The purpose of both was the purpose of Spenser in his *Faerie Queene*, to show how a gentleman should be educated and trained. A number of plays were also written by him; but none have held the stage. Lyly died in London in 1606, when Shakespeare was a man of forty-two. In his prime of life he seems to have suffered from courtly neglect and poverty; for in the year 1593 we find him writing to the Queen: "Thirteen years your Highness's servant, but yet nothing; twenty friends that though they say they will be sure, I find them sure to be slow. A thousand hopes, but all nothing; a hundred promises, but yet nothing."

12. **Euphues**.—Euphues is a well-born gentleman of Athens who sets out on his travels, and, among other places, visits Naples—"a place of more pleasure than profit, and yet of more profit than piety." There he meets an old and much-experienced gentleman, Eubulus,<sup>2</sup> who tells him about the city, warns him against its dangers, and sums up his advice in these words: "Serve God, love God, fear God, and God will so bless thee as either heart can wish or thy friends desire." But Euphues, like other young men, disdains the advice, and prefers to purchase his experience in the usual way. When he gets back to Athens, however, he writes an earnest letter to a friend, warning him of

<sup>1</sup> The Weald or Wold (a forest) of Kent is the Kentish portion of a large district which runs from Kent through Sussex and Surrey and even into Hampshire.

<sup>2</sup> Well-advised.

the snares and traps laid for young travellers in Italy. The book also contains an essay on the education of the young. Euphues continues his travels into England, lands with his friend Philautus<sup>1</sup> at Dover, and passes through Canterbury. They call by the way on a retired courtier, who keeps bees, and has many sage remarks to make about them. In London the two young gentlemen frequent the polite society of Camilla and other fair, wise, and pious ladies, between whom and the gentlemen much "conceited," antithetic, and ornate conversation passes. The style of both books is elaborate, epigrammatic, affected, and abounding in similes, drawn from the animal, the vegetable, and the mineral worlds. The distinctive marks of Euphuism are antithesis and balance of phrases (which usually run in pairs), elaborate alliteration, and endless similes. Otherwise the English is idiomatic and simple. The euphuism which his book gave a name to, was a persistent elaboration of a style that had been current even before he began to write—a style that suited "the dainty ear of the curious sifter." "It is a world," says Lyly himself, "to see how Englishmen desire to hear a finer speech than the language will allow; to eat finer bread than is made of wheat; to wear finer cloth than is wrought of wool."

(i) The word *Euphues* means well-natured, well-bred. The term *Euphuism* is sometimes confounded with *euphemism* (= delicacy in expression).

(ii) *Conceit* meant originally a *thought*. It is simply a form of the Latin *conceptus* (concept). It is only within late times that it has gained an offensive meaning. Chaucer was called "a conceited clerk"—a man of learning and ingenuity; Drayton speaks of "conceited masques"—ingeniously constructed; and Evelyn tells us of a "conceited chair to sleep in," meaning a chair ingeniously devised for sleep.

(iii) "Our nation are in his debt for a new English which he taught them. Euphues and his England began first that language; all our ladies were then his scholars; and that Beauty in Court which could not parley Euphuism—that is to say, who was unable to converse in pure and reformed English, which he had formed his work to be the standard of—was as little regarded as she which now there speaks not French."—SIR HENRY BLOUNT (1632).

#### *Extract from LOVE'S CONSTANCY.*

When my lady had ended this strange discourse, I was stricken into such a maze, that for the space almost of half an hour, I

<sup>1</sup> Self-lover.



lay as it had been in a trance, mine eyes almost standing in my head without motion, my face without colour, my mouth without breath, insomuch that Iffida began to screech out, and call company, which called me also to myself, and then with a faint and trembling tongue, I uttered these words: "Lady, I cannot use as many words as I would, because you see I am weak, nor give so many thanks as I should, for that you deserve infinite. If Thyrsis have planted the vine, I will not gather the grapes: neither is it reason, that he having sowed with pain, that I should reap the pleasure. This sufficeth me and delighteth me not a little, that you are so faithful, and he so fortunate. Yet, good lady, let me obtain one small suit, which derogating nothing from your true love, must needs be lawful, that is, that I may in this sickness enjoy your company, and if I recover, be admitted as your servant: the one will hasten my health, the other prolong my life."

13. **Robert Greene** (1558—1592).—The popularity of Lyly's style produced many imitators, the most successful of whom was probably Robert Greene, whom we shall again meet in connection with the Elizabethan drama. Born at Norwich, he was educated at St. John's College, Cambridge, where he graduated in 1578; and, as was then fashionable, travelled on the Continent for two or three years, visiting, as he tells us in the *Repentance of Robert Greene*, both Italy and Spain, "where," he says, "he both sawe and practizde such villainie as is abhominable to declare." He published in 1588 the novel of *Dorastus and Faunia*, with the alternative title of *Pandosto; or, the Triumph of Time*. On this novel Shakespeare founded his drama, *The Winter's Tale*. Greene fell, like so many of the Elizabethan writers, into bad habits and bad company; and, though his evil courses seem to have alternated with fits of genuine repentance, he died miserably "of a surfeit of pickled herrings and Rhenish wine" on September 3rd, 1592, at his lodging near Dowgate, in the house of a poor shoemaker, whose wife crowned his head after death with a garland of bays. "He was buried in the New Churchyard near Bedlam on the following day, the cost of the funeral being 6s. 4d."



The following extract from *Pandosto* is a fair specimen of Greene's prose style:—

Alas, sweet, unfortunate babe, scarce born before envied by Fortune, would the day of thy birth had been the term of thy life: then shouldst thou have made an end to care and prevented thy father's rigour. Thy faults cannot yet deserve such hateful revenge, thy days are too short for so sharp a doom, but thy untimely death must pay thy mother's debts, and her guiltless crime must be thy ghastly curse. And shalt thou, sweet babe, be committed to Fortune, when thou art already spited by Fortune? Shall the seas be thy harbour, and the hard boat thy cradle? Shall thy tender mouth, instead of sweet kisses, be nipped with bitter storms? Shalt thou have the whistling winds for thy lullaby, and the salt sea-foam instead of sweet milk? Alas, what destinies would assign such hard hap? Let me kiss thy lips, sweet infant, and wet thy tender cheeks with my tears, and put this chain about thy neck, that if Fortune save thee, it may help to succour thee. Thus since thou must go to surge in the gastful seas, with a sorrowful kiss I bid thee farewell, and I pray the gods that thou mayest fare well.

14. **Sir Philip Sidney** (1554—1586), a poet, a critic, student, soldier, and statesman, was born at Penshurst Castle, in Kent (one of the loveliest of the "homes of England"), and educated at Shrewsbury School; at the age of thirteen he was entered of Christ Church, Oxford. His father was Sir Henry Sidney, Lord Deputy in Ireland; his mother was the eldest daughter of John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, and sister of the Earl of Leicester. He did not stay long at Oxford, but left it to travel on the continent. In the month of August, 1572, he was in Paris on St. Bartholomew's Day (August 24th), and barely escaped assassination, by taking refuge in the house of Walsingham, the English Ambassador. From Paris he went on to Frankfort, and thence to Vienna, where he gave up his time to horsemanship, fencing, tilting, and, in short, to learning the use of every kind of weapon and every kind of martial exercise. Going on to Italy, he studied geometry and astronomy at Venice and Padua; and after three years' absence he returned to England,

where he became "the pride and delight of the English Court." In 1581 Sidney entered Parliament as Knight of the Shire for the county of Kent; and in 1585 he was appointed Governor of Flushing. The year after, he took the field against the Spaniards and besieged them in Zutphen, where he was fatally wounded, and died at the age of thirty-one. His body was brought home and buried in St. Paul's, amid the mourning of the whole nation. Sidney, besides being the most perfect example of the chivalry of his age, has a distinct place in literature. His chief prose works are the *Arcadia*—a romance in the style of Lyly's *Euphues*, written to amuse his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, and styled by Milton "a vain and amatorious poem."—and the *Apologie for Poetrie*—the first piece of pure literary criticism in the English language, and the source from which many other critics have drawn their opinions and their arguments. He also wrote a series of beautiful sonnets (see p. 111). His writings—prose and verse—were circulated in ms. during his lifetime, and not printed till after his death.

(i) Sidney's sister was that Countess of Pembroke of whom Ben Jonson wrote:—

Underneath this sable hearse  
Lies the subject of all verse,  
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother:  
Death! ere thou hast slain another  
Learn'd and fair and good as she,  
Time shall throw a dart at thee.

(ii) In 1578, when Sidney was a young man of four-and-twenty, William the Silent (1533—1584, William of Nassau, Prince of Orange, and an ancestor of our William III.) requested Fulke Greville to tell Queen Elizabeth that "Her Majesty had one of the ripest and greatest Counsellors of Estate in Sir Philip Sidney that at this day lived in Europe."

(iii) The *Sonnets* were published in 1591; the *Arcadia* in part in 1590, in its entirety in 1593; and the *Apologie* in 1595.

(iv) "Sidney's works well accord with his life; in these few years he had time to take in with a clear and kindly glance all those beauties of ancient or modern times, of distant countries or of his own, which set the hearts of his contemporaries beating, and he is therefore, perhaps, on account of his catholicity, the most worthy of Shakespeare's immediate precursors."—JUSSERAND.

15. **The Travellers.**—The expansion of the known world, consequent on the discovery of America, revived that interest in books

of travel which had been kindled by the Crusades in the fourteenth century. First amongst sixteenth-century writers to satisfy this demand stands **Richard Hakluyt** (1552—1616). Born at Eyton, in Herefordshire, educated at Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford, he took holy orders, and obtained in 1583 a chaplaincy to the English Ambassador in Paris. He early turned his attention to geography and books of travel, and published while in France an annotated edition of Martyr's <sup>1</sup> *De Orbe Novo*, and wrote an account of Laudonnière's expedition to Florida. His great work, the *Principall Navigations, Voiages, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, first appeared in 1589, and was republished in three volumes, 1598—1600. He has given his name to the Hakluyt Society, founded in London in 1846 for the publication of rare works on early geography, history, and travels. His writings did much to foster the spirit of naval adventure and national pride which is so characteristic of the age of Elizabeth. He was followed by **Samuel Purchas** (1575—1626), also a clergyman, born at Thaxted, in Essex, author of *Purchas: His Pilgrimage*, published in 1613. With this was embodied much of the work of Hakluyt, and the whole appeared in five volumes, known under the title of *Purchas's Pilgrims*.

With these should be classed the writings of **Sir John Davis** (1530—1605), one of the earliest seekers for the North-West Passage. He discovered in 1585 the Strait which bears his name, and was killed by Japanese pirates in the Strait of Malacca, December 27th, 1605.

16. **Walter Raleigh** (1552—1618), courtier, soldier, sailor, statesman, historian, and poet, was born at the manor-house of Hayes Barton, near Budleigh, in Devonshire. He studied at the colleges of Christ Church and Oriel in Oxford; but he broke off his residence at college to fight with the Huguenots in France against the Roman Catholic party. Privateering was the favourite pursuit of the more daring spirits of Queen Elizabeth's reign; and the Spanish galleons which were constantly going to and fro, laden with gold,

<sup>1</sup> Peter Martyr de Anghiera, born near Milan 1455; died at Valladolid 1526. His principal work, *De Orbe Novo*, treats of the first thirty years of American discovery.

silver, and precious stones, between Spain and South America, were always a tempting prey. Raleigh equipped vessels for cutting out and taking the Spanish treasure-ships; and winning fame in this way, he rose quickly in favour with the Queen, who admired brave and handsome men. By her he was knighted (1585), presented with 12,000 acres of forfeited estates in Ireland, received a monopoly of wines, was made Captain of the Guard and Vice-Admiral of Devon and Cornwall. His friend Spenser called him the "Shepherd of the Ocean"; and there was no expedition, by sea or land, that he was not eager for. In the year 1591 he wrote an account of the famous "Fight of the Revenge," waged at the Azores in a single ship by his cousin, Sir Richard Grenville, against the combined Spanish Fleet. This little book "is one which no Englishman can read without being stirred by it as with the sound of a trumpet." The description is closely followed by Tennyson in his poem, *The Revenge: A Ballad of the Fleet*. In 1595 he sailed on an expedition to Guiana, to find the El Dorado of South America. In 1596 he joined Essex in his expedition against Cadiz, "to singe the King of Spain's beard." With the death of Elizabeth and the accession of James I., the black days of adversity came upon Raleigh. He was accused of being a partner in a plot to place Arabella Stuart on the throne, was tried and sentenced to death, but was reprieved and thrown into the Tower. Here he spent twelve years—years given to chemical studies and the writing of his *History of the World*, which was never finished. He was released to make a last expedition to Guiana in 1618; it failed, and James I., to gratify Spanish hatred and revenge, sent Raleigh to the block, under his old sentence, given fifteen years before, and he was executed in Old Palace Yard, Westminster, on October 29th, 1618. His headless corpse was interred in the chancel of St. Margaret's Church, near the scene of his execution: the place is now marked by a brass tablet.

(i) El Dorado (Spanish = The Gilded), the mythical chief of a city of fabulous wealth supposed by the Spaniards to exist in South or Central America. The name is commonly applied to the city, which was an object of search to all the early explorers of South America.

(ii) The *History of the World* was conceived on an impossible plan; it ends about 170 B.C., when the Romans had made a final conquest of



Macedon. Written on such a scale, and at so slow a rate, the *History of the World* could never be accomplished in the course of a single life. But beyond the interest attaching to it as written in the weary years passed in prison, portions of the book possess a distinct value for the brilliancy of the style. These are scattered through its pages with much that is poor, frigid, and featureless; and judging from the latter, it is probable that Raleigh was assisted by others in the compilation of the work.

### THE REVENGE.

The Master Gunner, finding himself and Sir Richard thus prevented and mastered by the greater number, would have slain himself with a sword had he not been by force withheld and locked into his cabin. Then the General sent many boats aboard *The Revenge*, and divers of our men, fearing Sir Richard's disposition, stole away aboard the General and other ships. Sir Richard, thus overmatched, was sent unto by Alonso Bassan to remove out of *The Revenge*, the ship being marvellous unsavoury, filled with blood and bodies of dead and wounded men like a slaughter-house. Sir Richard answered that he might do with his body what he list, for he esteemed it not, and as he was carried out of the ship he swooned, and reviving again desired the company to pray for him. The General used Sir Richard with all humanity, and left nothing unattempted that tended to his recovery, highly commending his valour and worthiness, and greatly bewailed the danger wherein he was, being unto them a rare spectacle, and a resolution seldom approved, to see one ship turn toward so many enemies, to endure the charge and boarding of so many huge Armados, and to resist and repel the assaults and entries of so many soldiers.

17. **Richard Hooker** (1553—1600), one of the greatest divines that England has produced, was born at Heavitree, near Exeter, five years before the accession of Elizabeth to the throne. At the age of fourteen he entered Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Ordained in 1582, he was appointed to preach at St. Paul's Cross, and three years after he received the appointment of Master of the Temple. Here he was not happy; he had a "silly, clownish, scolding wife" at home; and in the pulpit, what he preached in the morning was flatly



contradicted by his colleague in the afternoon. "The forenoon sermons spoke Canterbury, and the afternoon Geneva."<sup>1</sup> Hooker soon grew weary of this—being a man, as he said himself, "whom God and Nature intended, not for contentions, but for study and quietness." The Archbishop of Canterbury was accordingly appealed to, and asked by Hooker to remove him "into some quiet parsonage, where I may see God's blessings spring out of my mother-earth, and eat my own bread in peace and privacy." The rectory of Boscombe, in Wiltshire, was accordingly given him in 1591, and in 1595 he became Rector of Bishopsbourne, in Kent, where he died in 1600. At Boscombe he finished four books of his great work, the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, which appeared in 1594; the fifth book was published in 1597, and the remaining three after his death. This work was intended to defend the Anglican Church against the attacks of the Roman Catholic party on the one hand, and the Calvinists on the other. But in it Hooker examines the foundations upon which all religious and political institutions are based. His style is often eloquent, and always rhetorical; and he had a fine ear for a well-balanced sentence. But, like most other writers of his century, the great length of his sentences sometimes wearies. His imagination was not creative; it depended on books and on what he had collected in the course of his reading. He never freed himself from the trammels of a Latin construction; and hence many of his sentences have an appearance of being laboured.

#### FROM THE SERMON ON THE NATURE OF PRIDE.

Justice, that which flourishing upholdeth, and not prevailing disturbeth, shaketh, threateneth with utter desolation and ruin the whole world: justice, that whereby the poor have their succour, the rich their ease, the potent their honour, the living their peace, the souls of the righteous departed their endless rest and quietness: justice, that which God and angels and men are principally exalted by: justice, the chiefest matter contended for at this day in the Christian world: in a word, justice, that whereon not only all our present happiness, but in the Kingdom of God our future joy

<sup>1</sup> Canterbury = conservative Anglicanism; Geneva = reforming Calvinism.

dependeth. So that, whether we be in love with the one or with the other, with things present or things to come, with earth or with heaven ; in that which is so greatly available to both, none can but wish to be instructed.

(i) "His style," says Fuller, "was long and <sup>forcible</sup> pithy, drawing on a whole flock of several clauses before he came to the end of a sentence."

(ii) "What is most remarkable throughout the whole argument is not any incisiveness or any originality of thought. Hooker's originality lies rather in his equable grasp of many truths, and in his power of co-ordinating and harmonising those truths."—DOWDEN.

## CHAPTER VII.

---

### THE DRAMA AND DRAMATISTS BEFORE SHAKESPEARE.

1. **The Drama.**—The origin of the Drama lies deep down in human nature. Children love to “act,” to perform a play, to represent some part of human life in which they will probably have to take a share when they come to be grown-up. Hence they love to imitate. They play “at shops”; they play “at soldiers”; they act a trial at law; their “whole vocation is,” as Wordsworth says, “endless imitation.” Action, speech, laughter—these produce comedy: action, speech, tears—these are the elements of tragedy.

2. **The Origin of the Drama.**—The English Drama had its origin chiefly in the services and customs of the Church. When by far the larger number of the people of England could not read, the clergy tried to teach them the Sacred History by dramatic representation, in which the personages of Scripture were shown in more or less appropriate dresses, went through a certain course of prescribed action, and made short speeches or took parts in dialogue. These were “Mysteries” or “Miracle Plays.” Strictly speaking, the mystery play was based on Bible incidents and Bible personages; the miracle play set forth incidents from the lives of the Saints. The earliest mysteries were written and spoken in Latin; the earliest representations were given in the churches themselves, and by the clergy and choristers.

(i) There is extant a miracle play called *St. Nicholas*, written in Latin, in the twelfth century, by an Englishman called Hilarius; this was performed in the church dedicated to that Saint. On St. Nicholas's Day the image of the Saint was removed, and a living actor, dressed like the statue, took his place in the shrine. At a pause in the service, a rich and richly dressed “heathen” enters, lays down his treasure at the foot of the shrine, and begs the Saint to keep a watchful eye upon it while he is absent on a

journey. Some thieves come in and carry off the treasure. The heathen returns, finds his treasure gone, takes up a whip and applies it to the back of the Saint. Then the image moves, comes down from its niche, goes out and talks with the thieves. The coming back of the Saint to life terrifies them, and they bring back the stolen treasure.

(ii) The earliest miracle play in English was *The Harrowing of Hell*, which belongs to the latter half of the thirteenth century.

3. **The Miracle Play.**—About the early part of the reign of Edward III. (1327—1377) miracle plays began to be acted in English. The feasts of the Church—on which there was a holiday for gentle and simple, for the working poor as well as for the rich—were great events in the Middle Ages; “people thought of them long before, saw them in the distance, towering above the common level of days, as cathedrals tower above houses.” The great Church festivals were Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide, and Corpus Christi; and on these days, and after them, were produced the well-known plays representing sacred subjects. In the course of time the production of these plays passed from the hands of the clergy into those of the Guilds of Towns. Each Guild fitted up “Pageants” or carriages, on four or on six wheels, with houses of two storeys upon them; in the lower room the actors dressed themselves and painted their faces, in the upper room they acted the play. When they had performed an act or play in one place, they wheeled the carriage on to another street. Thus the whole town became one great open-air theatre; ordinary business gave way entirely to these representations. Each car or pageant was set apart to represent one of the places where the events of the play were enacted. The fittest spots for the performances were at the crossings of streets or in the chief squares of the town; and thrice fortunate were the families who had houses that looked upon these crossings or squares. And so sequences of plays were represented in cities like London, Dublin, York, Chester, Coventry, Lancaster, and Preston. On high-days and holidays, such dramas occupied the town; the whole city was given up to the drama; and three days, sometimes as many as eight, were devoted to dramatic enjoyment.

(i) “After 1417, the choosing of the places for the representations was regulated by auction, and the plays were performed under the windows of

the highest bidders. In other cases the scaffolds were fixed, so that the representation was performed only at one place."—J. J. JUSSERAND.

(ii) Each Guild in a town would take upon itself the proper mounting and acting of one play in the series. Thus, at Easter, the Guild of Tanners enacted *The Fall of Lucifer*; the Drapers performed *The Creation and Fall*; the Water-baders or Water-drawers set forth *The Story of Noah's Flood*. Each Guild possessed and kept in good repair—mended and gilded when necessary—the properties, furniture, and dresses required for each play.

(iii) In the play of *The Day of Judgment*, those who represented the souls of the saved were dressed in white leather; the others had their faces bleached, and wore linen dresses painted in black, yellow, and red—to suggest fire and flames.

(iv) Sometimes these plays took days to perform. In the year 1409, when Henry IV. was King, the Parish Clerks of London gave, at Islington, a play called *Matter from the Creation of the World*, which lasted eight days.

4. **The Four Collections.**—There are in existence at the present time four great collections of these sacred plays. They are known as the York, the Wakefield or Towneley, the Coventry, and the Chester Plays. They are written in very various metres; rime and alliteration, sometimes the two together, are employed; the lines are sometimes long, sometimes short; and lyrical stanzas are now and then introduced. The series used in one town might be borrowed by another; but, in general, each town wrote and produced its own plays.

(i) The **York Collection** contains forty-eight pieces, and belongs to the middle of the fourteenth century.

(ii) The **Wakefield Collection** contains thirty-two, and belongs to the middle of the fifteenth century. This cycle is also called the "Towneley Collection," because they belonged to the library of the Towneley family, of Towneley Hall, Lancashire. Twenty-four of these plays are based on the New Testament; eight on the Old.

(iii) The **Coventry Collection** contains forty-two plays. The mss. belong to the fifteenth century.

(iv) The **Chester Collection** contains twenty-four plays. The mss. belong to the end of the fifteenth century.

5. **Occasions of the Plays.**—As we have seen, the festivals of the Church were the chief occasions for the representations of these plays. But there were others. Political or artistic processions also gave openings for the representations of plays. A marriage, the entrance of the King into London, a feast given by a noble, the starting of a pilgrimage to Palestine—all these, and others, became the occasions for a procession, and, during the



procession, for the presentation of a play. The town was swept and garnished; silk banners and wreaths were hung out; candles and lamps were put up; the houses were decked with flowers and blossom; the streets were lined with cloth of gold and purple; gay tapestries, carpets, and hangings were displayed in the windows; every street was a blaze of colour. The Guilds donned their brightest and newest liveries, and drew from their chests their banners, chains, and insignia. Richard II., who had been insulted by the citizens of London, sent word that he meant to forgive them, and that he would make his entry into their city in the month of August. Accordingly, on August 29th, 1393, that unhappy but gorgeous monarch made his entry in state, accompanied by Anne, his queen. The City of London put forth every effort to make the procession magnificent beyond all conception. Guild after Guild defiled through the streets in their most brilliant dresses, marching among dwarfs and giants, and bearing "monsters and gilt fishes," with strange animals from far countries in their cages. At Temple Bar a forest had been arranged, and animals of all kinds put into it—serpents, lions, a bear, a tiger, an elephant, a beaver, monkeys, "all which were there, running about, biting each other, fighting, jumping."

6. **The Comic Element.**—As a relief from the sombre and too serious events of the miracle plays, comic or farcical interludes were introduced; or, rather, any comic or ludicrous situation that suggested itself was expanded, developed, and dwelt upon. A quarrel between man and wife is a standing dish of comedy, and has been so from the beginning. These miracle plays, accordingly, give scenes between Noah and his wife, between Joseph and Mary—and so on. In all the collections of English miracle plays, Noah's wife is a shrew, refuses to enter the Ark, and makes Noah wish that he had built a separate Ark, "all for herself alone." And it is out of scenes like these that our English comedy has grown. The following is a specimen of the kind of dialogue that took the ears of the groundlings in the Middle Ages:—

*Noah.* The Ark is ready; it is time to set sail. Come along, good wife!

*Wife.* What, get into that boat, and leave the solid land? Oh, no! Not for me, I can tell you. Besides, I had made up my mind to go to town this very day. I have a good deal of shopping to do.

- N.* But the Flood is coming ; and you will be drowned.  
*W.* O ! I am not afraid of that.  
*N.* But the rain has been getting heavier and heavier ; it has gone on for ever so long ; and I can see no sign of its stopping. Do come and take your place in the Ark !  
*W.* The Ark ? What do you mean ? What secret is this you have been keeping from me ? Why did you not consult your own wife ?  
*N.* Secret ! There has been no secret ! Why, I have been working at the Ark for a century ! You could have seen it in the yard any time these last hundred years.  
*W.* Well, well, that may be ; but I don't care for life in a boat. I am very well where I am. Life on the water is not at all pleasant ; and I don't mean to go.  
*N.* But you will certainly be drowned !  
*W.* But you have room in the Ark for some of my gossips, I suppose ? I cannot do without society. To be shut up in that big boat with nobody to talk to—with beasts and birds and creeping things ! Eugh ! The very idea makes me sick.  
     [Here she gives Noah a box on the ear.]  
*N.* Be still, good wife !  
     [The wife at length gets in, and the quarrel probably continues at intervals during the voyage.]

7. **Moralities.**—Another class of play came into fashion in the beginning of the fifteenth century. These plays were called "Moralities." A morality is a play that enforces some moral truth or lesson. The "characters" in these plays were not real persons at all, but abstract qualities—vices and virtues ; and the passion for such plays probably arose from the fondness for allegorical poetry that was common in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Abstractions had been introduced into the miracle plays as early as the fourteenth century—such abstractions as *Mundus* (the World), the Seven Deadly Sins, Justice, Truth, Peace, and others. The chief "character" in such plays was the "Vice" ; and he so became by degrees, because he had to do the comic business, to relieve the too serious tone of the play by jesting, romping, and playing practical jokes. This character slowly developed into the clown or fool, who is so often introduced by Shakespeare (in *King Lear*, for instance) as a relief to the too tragic character of certain plays. Vice was armed with a wooden dagger, and the same weapon is found to-day in the hand of Harlequin. Shakespeare refers to him in *Twelfth Night* :—

Who with dagger of lath  
In his rage and his wrath,  
Cries, "Ah, ha ! to the devil !"

This class of drama gradually drew further away from the miracle plays, and reached its fullest development in the time of the early Tudors. The miracle plays themselves seem to have been acted as late as 1575 ; that is, to about the middle of the reign of Elizabeth.

(i) A miracle play is said to have been acted at Newcastle as late as 1598.

(ii) In other places performances of moralities were given as late as the beginning of the seventeenth century.

(iii) The morality play of *Everyman* has recently been acted in London, and elsewhere, by a private company of amateurs.

**8. Interludes.**—This form of drama was a short play written for performance between the courses at state banquets or other feasts of ceremony. Plays of this kind were in general short and coarse. The first Interludes were written by **John Heywood** in 1521 (the twelfth year of the reign of Henry VIII.). The best known of these interludes is that with the title of *The Four PP: a very merry Interlude of a Palmer, a Pardoner, a Potecary, and a Pedlar*.

The following is a short account of this Interlude : The Palmer and the Pardoner fall into a dispute as to which of the two can do most for the soul. The Palmer says that he has travelled "in many a fair and far countrie," and that it is a good thing to go "on pilgrimage." The Pardoner replies that the chances are that a pilgrim "will come home as wise as he went." The Potecary (Apothecary) comes in and boasts of his extensive knowledge of poisons and other drugs. To these enters the Pedlar, who puts down his pack, displays his wares, but finds no purchasers. The three first interlocutors agree to refer their differences to him. But the Pedlar declines : he is not subtle enough to judge of matters so difficult ; but, as he observes that all of them possess a talent for falsehood, he fancies he can judge which is the greatest liar of the three. Each of them tells a story which is to be the most difficult of belief that can be imagined. The prize falls to the Palmer, who declares that he has visited many a city, town, and borough, has seen and talked with half a million women, but that he never saw or heard of a woman that lost her temper.

And this I would have you understand,  
 I have seen women five hundred thousand,  
 And oft with them have long time tarried,  
 Yet in all places where I have been,  
 Of all the women that I have seen,  
 I never saw, nor knew in my conscience,<sup>1</sup>  
 Any one woman out of patience.<sup>1</sup>

And the prize falls to the Palmer.

To advance from these religious subjects, with their mixture of affairs of everyday life, to matters altogether secular, was but a step, and hence we find that characters and incidents were soon taken from profane history, and personifications of vices and virtues were abandoned for men and women of real life.

9. **Masques.**—Early in the reign of Henry VIII. there came to England from Italy a kind of dramatic entertainment called a **Masque**. It was a short play, brightened by music, striking scenery, brilliant dresses, and dancing. The characters were played by lords and ladies. A hundred years later, such plays were written by Ben Jonson, and "mounted" with all kinds of elaborate machinery by the famous architect Inigo Jones. This kind of historic spectacle, or "musical drama," was most in vogue during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; and not only Ben Jonson, but Beaumont and Fletcher, and John Milton wrote excellent examples.

(i) An older form of Masque was called a "Disguising"; and such short dramas were played as early as the reign of Edward III. In a "Disguising," the performers wore a disguising dress; in a Masque they also covered the face. Little Scottish boys, who on November 5th don masks and motley, still call themselves "guisers."

(ii) Milton's *Comus* and *Arcades* are very good examples of Masques. In the latter "some Noble Persons appear on the scene in Pastoral Habit." Then the "Genius of the Wood" appears and speaks:—

Stay, gentle swains, for, though in this disguise,  
 I see bright honour sparkle thro' your eyes;  
 Of famous Arcady ye are, and sprung  
 Of that renowned flood, so often sung,  
 Divine Alphæus, who, by secret sluice,  
 Stole under seas to meet his Arethuse.

The songs are sung to music; and the performance ends with obeisances and curtsies to the presiding lady.

<sup>1</sup> These words are trisyllables, with the accent on the last.



✓ 10. **The Establishment of the Theatre.**—Miracle plays were both written and acted by town guilds, and they were also performed by "the children"—that is, the choristers—of a cathedral. As the acting of ordinary plays became more and more the fashion in England, so the tendency increased to train young persons for performing them, to set them apart for this, and thus to prepare the way for "playing" or "acting" to become a profession. In this way arose bodies of "Servants of the Queen's Court," "The Earl of Leicester's Servants," the "servants" of other great houses, which were, indeed, only smaller courts, and to each of these courts the respective companies owed their licence. As time went on these bodies of "servants" formed themselves into professional companies, and went about the country as strolling players, giving entertainments in the various towns which they visited. They retained the name of the "Earl of Leicester's Servants," or the "Duke of Somerset's Servants," for the sake of protecting themselves from the operations of the law against vagabonds; but they were perfectly independent of the nobleman whose name they bore.

11. **The Locus of the Theatre.**—The earliest plays were represented in the large hall of the King's palace, or of some noble house, or of one of the Inns of Court, or in the hall of a college in Oxford or in Cambridge. But, for the general public of a town, the place most usually selected was the courtyard of an inn. The old English inns (of which there are still a few specimens remaining—in York, in Coventry, Chester, and other towns) were built round a court, where the carriages and waggons of travellers were put up. Round these courtyards ran two or three rows of galleries, from which the travellers entered their bedrooms. A platform was erected at the back of the courtyard; and the portion of the gallery or balcony above the platform was held to represent a castle or an upper room. There was no scenery; but a small black-board was hung up on which was written, "This is the Forest of Arden," "This is Castle Gloom," or the name of a town as the action shifted from place to place. The audience stood in the court; these were what Shakespeare calls the "groundlings." The better class were accommodated in the rooms, or in those



parts of the galleries from which they could get a proper view and hear well.

What are now called "boxes" in a theatre were down to the seventeenth century called "rooms"; and the idea was developed from the bedrooms of an inn.

12. **The First Theatres.**—Puritan feeling had been strong in London since Reformation days, and there were many who disliked all plays and play-acting, classing the performers with the brutal conductors of bear-gardens and bull-baitings, and the itinerant acrobats and jugglers who thronged the yards of inns or other convenient places. To put a stop to the abuses, common in places of public amusement at the time, the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London in 1575 enforced strict regulations, made the licensing of plays compulsory, and prohibited Sunday performances. Hence the earliest regular theatres were erected outside the City bounds—in Blackfriars, in Shoreditch, or on the south or "Bank" side of the river, Southwark, in which were erected the Globe, the Rose, and the Swan. The first theatre in the neighbourhood of London was built of wood in 1576 (when Shakespeare was twelve years of age), and was called simply **The Theatre**. It was erected between Finsbury Fields and Shoreditch by James Burbage, the father of Richard Burbage, who took the leading parts in Shakespeare's plays, and was the first impersonator of Hamlet, Lear, and Othello. The Curtain Theatre soon after arose not far from the other. In 1598 Burbage pulled down **The Theatre**, carried the materials to the other side of the river, and erected **The Globe** on Bankside, Southwark. It was on the outside a hexagon, but inside a circle. It was open to the sky in the middle; only the stage and the galleries were covered with a thatched roof. The interior was constructed after the model of an inn yard, with three galleries. The "pit" was in the centre of the building, and there were no seats for the "groundlings." There were, however, seats in the galleries and also on the stage; the latter were stools, much sought after by the young gallants, who paid an additional sixpence for the privilege of sitting there. The stage was strewn with rushes for carpet, just like the rooms of ordinary houses. The young gentlemen sat on

the stage, listening to the actors, criticising them between the acts, drinking beer and smoking long pipes. Their pages handed them fresh pipes and tobacco, at that time a new and fashionable luxury. The play began about three o'clock in the afternoon, and the commencement was proclaimed by three flourishes of a trumpet. When a tragedy was to be performed, the play-bills were printed in red. There was no scenery; placards or blackboards were hung up, with the name of the supposed scene printed in large letters; the active and ardent imagination of the audience did the rest. As Charles Lamb says:—

The air-blest castle, round whose wholesome crest  
The martlet, guest of summer, chose her nest—  
The forest-walks of Arden's fair domain,  
Where Jaqués fed his solitary vein,—  
No pencil's aid as yet had dared supply,  
Seen only by th' intellectual eye.

The female characters were taken by boys, to which fact Shakespeare makes special reference. At the end of each act, the clown or buffoon actor of the company sang or recited what was called a "jig," but was in reality a "topical" song, into which were introduced allusions to the celebrated or notorious personages and the best-known events of the day. At the close of the performance, the whole body of the actors knelt down at the front of the stage, and offered up a prayer for the Queen.

(i) Over the door of the Globe was the sign of the house—a Hercules with a globe on his shoulders. Besides the Globe, there was the Blackfriars Theatre. In both of these houses Shakespeare had shares, and in both his plays were acted. The Globe was the summer theatre; the Blackfriars was a winter house. It was for these two houses alone that Shakespeare wrote; and he, of course, shared in the profits of both. Such men as Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford, and Massinger, also wrote for both theatres.

(ii) Movable scenery was not used in English theatres till after the Restoration. It was introduced by Sir William Davenant.

(iii) It was only after the Restoration, too, that women were commonly seen on the stage. Pepys writes, January 3rd, 1661: "To the Theatre, when was acted *Beggars Bush*; and here the first time that ever I saw women come upon the stage."

**13. Pre-Shakespearean Dramatists.**—The play of *King John*, written about 1550 by John Bale, Bishop of Ossory, during the reign of Edward VI., combines the allegorical element with history,

and is interesting as a first attempt to dramatise the latter. In time historical plays became very popular, and *The True Chronicle History of King Lear* and the *Famous Victories of Henry V.* were written and acted before Shakespeare selected these as subjects for his plays. The writers based them on the old chronicles, and kept very close, like Shakespeare himself, to the account therein given. The influence of Latin dramatic literature becomes evident in the middle of the sixteenth century, and this was in the nature of things, as the plays were produced by academic men, and were intended to be performed in schools.

14. **Ralph Roister Doister.**—The first regular comedy written in English was *Ralph Roister Doister*. Its author was **Nicholas Udall** (1505—1556), who was headmaster of Eton and afterwards of Westminster School. The old custom in the great English Public Schools was on certain special occasions to act a play of one of the Roman poets, with a prologue and an epilogue in Latin verse. It occurred to Dr. Udall that it would be an excellent novelty for the boys to act a play in English; and he accordingly wrote this comedy. There is nothing of high merit, either in the plot or in the language; though the dialogue gives a good idea of London manners in the sixteenth century.

(i) A Roister (or Roisterer or Roysterer), afterwards styled a "Roaring Boy," is a blustering, swaggering bully.

(ii) The play is quoted in Wilson's *Rule of Reason*, 1553, and is believed to have been performed before that date.

15. **Gammer Gurton's Needle** is the second comedy of any standing in the history of English literature. It was written by **John Still** (1543—1607), a scholar and cleric who in 1592 became Bishop of Bath and Wells. He died in 1607, and was buried in Wells Cathedral, where his effigy may still be seen. *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (which was "played on stage, in Christ's College, Cambridge," in 1566) is really a broad farce, and is remarkable chiefly for containing one of the very best convivial songs in the English language; though it is quite probable that this song is older than the play, and was borrowed by the author.

(i) The song, modernised, is as follows :—

I cannot eat but little meat,  
My stomach is not good ;  
But sure I think that I can drink  
With him that wears a hood.  
Though I go bare, take ye no care,  
I am nothing a-cold,  
I stuff my skin so full within  
Of jolly good ale and old.

And so on through half-a-dozen verses more.

(ii) *Gammer* is a dialectic contraction of grandmother, as *gaffer* is of grandfather. "The words are corruptions of granfer and grammer, which are the West of England forms of grandfather and grandmother."—SKEAT.

(iii) The plot of the play is as follows : Gammer Gurton is mending the breeches of her servant-man Hodge, and loses her needle. Diccon o' Bedlam, a half-insane beggar, accuses a woman in the village of stealing it. A stormy quarrel arises ; and the whole village joins in the dispute. Tib, Gammer Gurton's maid, takes a part in the uproar ; so does a neighbour, Dame Chat, and her maid, Doll ; Master Bailey, another neighbour, and his servant, Spendthrift ; Doctor Rut, the curate ; and Gib the Cat. The language is spirited and coarse. At length the needle is found to his discomfort by Hodge, sticking in his breeches, in the very place where the Gammer had left off sewing.

(iv) The play is written in long metre of fifteen or sixteen syllables, and in a doggerel rime.

(v) "Such was the wit, such was the mirth of our ancestors—homely, but hearty ; coarse, perhaps, but kindly ; let no man despise it ; for 'evil to him that evil thinks.' To think it poor and beneath notice, because it is not just like ours, is the same sort of hypercriticism that was exercised by the person who refused to read some old books because they were 'such very poor spelling.'"—HAZLITT.

16. **The First Tragedy.**—The tragedy of *Gorboduc*, or (as it was afterwards called) *Ferrex and Porrex*, was the first regular tragedy in English. It was written by **Thomas Sackville** (p. 110) and **Thomas Norton** (1532—1584), eldest son of a Bedfordshire gentleman. It was acted by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple at the Christmas festivities of 1561, and repeated by them by special command before Queen Elizabeth at Whitehall, on the 18th of the following January, in the third year of her reign. It is also the first English drama written largely in blank verse. The language of the play is heavy, stiff, and slow ; but there are some vigorous and stately lines. There are no "runnings-on" : the sense generally ends with the line.



(i) The following is a short summary of the play: Gorboduc is King of Great Britain; Videna is his Queen; and their two sons are Ferrex and Porrex. Gorboduc divides his kingdom between the two sons; they quarrel; and in the fight which ensues Porrex kills Ferrex. Videna vows vengeance on Porrex, and stabs him in his sleep. The British people rise in revolt, and put to death King Gorboduc and Queen Videna.

(ii) No action happens on the stage; the tale is told in the dialogue by messengers, who come in with news, and by a Chorus of "four wise elders of Britain."

(iii) Sir Philip Sidney, in his *Apologie for Poetrie*, says of *Gorboduc*: "It is full of stately speeches, and well-sounding phrases, clyming to the height of *Seneca* his stile, and as full of notable moralitie, which it doth most delightfully teach; and so obtayne the very end of Poesie."

17. **The University Wits.**—The rival theatres were always very anxious, on the one hand, to keep their repertoires to themselves, and, on the other, to possess themselves of new plays. A monopoly of plays was quite necessary for their success; and novelty was required for a continuance of this success. Hence the managers were constantly engaged in finding men, either in their own companies or outside of them, who could patch up old plays with new matter, and polish the old lines which they retained. Shakespeare himself was engaged on this kind of work for years. But there was, in the end of the sixteenth century, a group of men who had studied at Oxford and Cambridge, and who gave their assistance to theatres either in writing new plays or in repairing old ones. These men went by the name of "University Wits," to distinguish them from the ordinary playwrights, who had never studied at a university. The chief of these were Marlowe, Greene, and Nash, who belonged to Cambridge; and Lyly, Peele, and Lodge, who came from Oxford.

18. **John Lyly** (1554—1606), whose literary reputation rests, as we have seen (p. 70), on his *Euphues; or, the Anatomy of Wit*, and on its continuation, *Euphues and his England*, also wrote nine plays for the revels of the court; and these were acted chiefly by the choristers of the Chapel Royal or of St. Paul's. The most important of these plays—all of which are short, and more like masques than regularly built dramas—are *Alexander* and *Campaspe* (1514), *Sappho and Phaon* (1584), *Endymion* (1591), and *Midas* (1592). How like the style of Lyly in his plays is to that of his



*Euphues*, and how full of "conceits" may be seen in the following soliloquy of *Phaon*: "Thou art a ferry-man, Phaon, yet a freeman; possessing for riches content, and for honours quiet. Thy thoughts are no higher than thy fortunes, nor thy desires greater than thy calling. Who climbeth, standeth on glass, and falleth on thorn. Thy heart's thirst is satisfied with thy hand's thrift, and thy gentle labours in the day turn to sweet slumbers in the night."

Of the lark he says:—

How at heaven's gates she claps her wings,  
The morn not waking till she sings.

His best known song is taken from the play of *Alexander and Campaspe*:—

Cupid and my Campaspe played  
At cards for kisses—Cupid paid;  
He stakes his quiver, bow and arrows,  
His mother's doves, and team of sparrows;  
Loses them too; then down he throws  
The coral of his lip, the rose  
Growing on's cheek (but none knows how);  
With these, the crystal of his brow,  
And then the dimple of his chin:  
All these did my Campaspe win.  
At last he set her both his eyes,  
She won, and Cupid blind did rise.  
O Love! has she done this to thee?  
What shall (Alas!) become of me?

19. **Thomas Lodge** (1558—1625) was born at West Ham, near London, the son of a prosperous citizen who attained the dignity of Lord Mayor. He was educated at Trinity College, Oxford, and took early to literature and playwriting. "He had his oare in every paper boate;" he wrote plays, poems, romances, and pamphlets. Giving up literature—resolved "to write no more of that whence shame doth grow"—he took to medicine, graduated as a doctor both at Avignon and at Oxford, became a Roman Catholic, and died in the year 1625. In addition to his own plays, none of which are much known, he collaborated with Greene in a drama entitled *A Looking Glass for London and England*. His best known work is probably his novel *Rosalynde; Euphues' Golden Legacy*, on which Shakespeare founded his play of *As You Like It*.

He was not one of the great lyrists of the Elizabethan age, but he had much of their lyrical art, and something of its magic. This is proved by some of his songs, such as the madrigal (from *Rosalynde*) commencing—

Love in my bosom like a bee  
Doth suck his sweet ;  
Now with his wings he plays with me,  
Now with his feet—

and the song from the play of *Robert, Second Duke of Normandy*—

Pluck the fruit and taste the pleasure  
Youthful lordlings, of delight ;  
Whilst occasion gives you seizure,  
Feed your fancies and your sight :  
After death when you are gone,  
Joy and pleasure is there none.

Here on earth is nothing stable,  
Fortune's changes well are known :  
Whilst as youth doth then enable,  
Let your seeds of joy be sown :  
After death when you are gone,  
Joy and pleasure is there none.

✓ 20. **George Peele** (1558—1597) was born in London, where his father was clerk of Christ's Hospital, and the son thus naturally became a blue-coat boy. He was then sent to Broadgates Hall (now Pembroke College, Oxford), and from there he was elected student of Christ Church, where he earned a high reputation for verse-writing. Peele left Oxford, a well-read classical scholar, to plunge into London life ; and a short career of reckless roystering, with such men as Kit Marlowe and Robert Greene, soon wearied him out with restlessness and disease. He says of himself:—

I laid me down laden with many cares,  
My bed-fellows almost these twenty years.

But he early attained fame by his plays, and Nash salutes him as "The Atlas of Poetrie and Primus verborum Artifex." He was an actor, and is stated on somewhat doubtful authority to have been a shareholder, along with Shakespeare, in the Blackfriars Theatre. His best known plays are the *Arraignement of Paris* and the *Love of King David and Fair Bethsabé* (Bathsheba) ; he also wrote a history play, *Edward I.* In this play we have a forecast of the great

speeches in praise of England that we find in Shakespeare's plays :—  
thus he says of Edward I. :—

And now, to eternise Albion's champions  
Equivalent with Trojan's ancient fame,  
Comes lovely Edward from Jerusalem,  
Veering before the wind, ploughing the sea ;  
His stretch'd sails fill'd with the breath of men,  
That through the world admire his manliness.

The fault of Peele's blank verse is its monotony ; he does not know how to vary his pauses ; the caesura almost always falls in the same place—that is, at the middle of the line. That he can write musical verse is evident from the following :—

Now comes my lover tripping like the roe,  
And brings my longings tangled in her hair :  
To 'joy her love I'll build a kingly bower,  
Seated in hearing of a hundred streams.

And that he could give expression to the sweetest lyrical movement is clear from the song (taken from his *Arraignment of Paris*) commencing :—

Fair and fair, and twice so fair  
As fair as any may be,  
The fairest shepherd on our green  
A love for any lady.

✓ 21. **Robert Greene** (1558—1592) (see p. 72), novelist, pamphleteer, and playwright, is another unfortunate example of the University Wits. After his return from the Continent he, in his own words, became "an author of plays and a penner of love-pamphlets, so that," he says, "I soon grew famous in that quality, that who, for that trade, known so ordinary about London as Robin Greene?" We still possess five or six of his plays, the best known of which are *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* and *A Looking Glass for London and England*—the latter written by Greene in conjunction with Lodge. But his fame rests chiefly on the lyrics sprinkled among his prose works, some of which are not unworthy of that "nest of singing birds" which lend such a charm to Elizabethan literature.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee ;  
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.  
Mother's wag, pretty boy,  
Father's sorrow, father's joy ;

When thy father first did see  
 Such a boy by him and me,  
 He was glad, I was woe ;  
 Fortune changed made him so,  
 When he left his pretty boy,  
 Last his sorrow, first his joy.

(i) In one of his pamphlets, called *A Groat's-worth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance*, there occurs a famous passage which has always been held to refer to Shakespeare : "There is an upstart crow beautified with our feathers, that, with his tiger's heart wrapt in a player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you ; and, being an absolute Johannes Factotum,<sup>1</sup> is, in his own conceit, the only *Shake-scene* in a country."

(ii) He is also the author of the following verses, among the finest in the English language. It is called

#### CONTENT.

Sweet are the thoughts that savour of content ;  
 The quiet mind is richer than a crown ;  
 Sweet are the nights in careless slumber spent ;  
 The poor estate scorns Fortune's angry frown ;  
 Such sweet content, such minds, such sleep, such bliss  
 Beggars enjoy, when princes oft do miss.  
 The homely house that harbours quiet rest ;  
 The cottage that affords no pride nor care ;  
 The mean that 'grees with country music best,  
 The sweet consort of mirth and music's fare ;  
 Obscured life sets down a type of bliss,  
 A mind content both crown and kingdom is.

22. **Thomas Nash** (1567—1601), the youngest of the group of University Wits, was born at Lowestoft, in Suffolk. He was the son of a clergyman, and was sent to St. John's College, Cambridge, where he was admitted a scholar in 1584. After seven years' residence, he left college without his degree of Master of Arts, being probably expelled for his share in a satire, not now extant. Like Greene, he travelled in Italy, and seems to have visited Ireland. He returned to London about 1589, where he made the acquaintance of Robert Greene, with whom he lived on terms of close friendship, and became a writer of pamphlets, romances, and plays. His life was, he says himself, "spent in fantastical satirism," and his pen was at the command of any who would pay him. His pamphlet, *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem*, printed

<sup>1</sup> Jack-of-all-trades.

in 1593, is, like Greene's *Groat's-worth of Wit*, a kind of repentant apology for a misspent life, as are also parts of his better known *Pierce Pennilesse his Supplication to the Devil*; and after a brief, struggling, jovial, and wild existence, he died at the early age of thirty-three. His best known play is a kind of pastoral comedy, entitled *Summer's<sup>1</sup> Last Will and Testament*. The play is written in a mixture of prose and blank verse—the latter by no means despicable—interspersed with lyrics, characterised by a strikingly modern tone, of which that beginning "Fair Summer droops" is a favourable specimen:—

Fair Summer droops, droop men and beasts therefore,  
So fair a summer look for never more;  
All good things vanish less than in a day,  
Peace, plenty, pleasure, suddenly decay.  
Go not yet away, bright soul of the sad year,  
The earth is hell when thou leav'st to appear.

The play, or *show*, as Nash himself calls it, was enacted in the presence of Queen Elizabeth in 1592. A contemporary says of him:—

His style was witty, though he had some gall;  
Something he might have mended, so say all.

In one of his pamphlets he has a striking passage on poetry: "Poetry is the honey of all flowers, the quintessence of all sciences, the marrow of all wits, and the very phrase of angels."

23. **Thomas Kyd** (1557—1595) is a dramatist of whose life little or nothing is known. He seems to have been educated at Merchant Taylors' School, and was perhaps a school-fellow of Edmund Spenser's. He is celebrated in the history of the English drama as the author of *The Spanish Tragedy*; or, *Hieronimo is Mad Again*. This play is really the second part of a previous play called *Hieronimo* (or *Jeronimo*). The play ends with a general massacre, much worse than that at the close of *Hamlet*:—

Horatio murdered in his father's bower;  
Vild Serberine by Pedringano slain;  
False Pedringano hanged by quaint device;  
Fair Isabella by herself misdome.

And so on with the others—Balthasar stabbed, the Duke of Castile and his son murdered, and Hieronimo committing suicide.

<sup>1</sup> Will Summer, or Sommers, was the celebrated court jester to Henry VIII., but the word is here used in a double sense.



The play fittingly concludes as it began, with a dialogue between the Ghost of a certain Don Andrea and Revenge, who seems to be custodian of the nether world. Kyd, misnamed "Sporting Kyd" by Ben Jonson, had an ambition to present, and he succeeded in presenting—

Tragoedia cothurnata<sup>1</sup>—fitting kings,  
Containing matter, and not common things.

Kyd stands apart from the group of dramatists here mentioned. He was not a university man, and his special importance lies in the effect of his work on the English drama, in introducing what has been called the "Tragedy of Blood."

24. **Christopher Marlowe** (1564—1593) was the greatest of all these "Wits," and the greatest dramatist, indeed, before Shakespeare that English literature can show. He was born at Canterbury in 1564, the year also of the birth of Shakespeare. The son of a shoemaker, he was educated, free of cost, at the King's School of his native town; and thence proceeded to Benet College (now Corpus Christi), Cambridge, where he graduated in 1583. At Cambridge he made the acquaintance, in fact gained the friendship, of Greene and Nash. He led a wild and irregular life, and was stabbed to death with his own dagger by a serving-man in a tavern brawl at Deptford, before he had reached the age of thirty. He was buried in the church of St. Nicholas in that suburb of London. In the year 1892, three hundred years after his death, his fellow-citizens of Canterbury erected a monument to his memory; it stands at the entrance to the Cathedral close.

25. **Marlowe's Plays.**—He left behind him seven plays, the best known of which is *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*. Next to this comes *The Jew of Malta*; and, after these, *Tamburlaine*<sup>2</sup> and *Edward II.*, the first great historical play of the Elizabethan

<sup>1</sup> Tragedy in the cothurnus, which was a thick-soled shoe, laced on the leg, and used on the Roman stage only by tragic actors. Cf. Milton, "If Jonson's learned sock be on."

<sup>2</sup> Timur, called Timur Leng (= "Timur the lame"), corrupted into Tamurlane or Tamburlaine, was a Tartar conqueror, born in Central Asia in 1333, died in 1405. The capital of his kingdom was Samarkand. He conquered Persia, Central Asia, and, in 1398, a great part of India.

dramatists. Marlowe was famous for the majesty of his blank verse; and every one is familiar with the phrase "Marlowe's mighty line." In the play of *The Tragical History*, Mephistopheles brings up the vision of Helen of Greece to gratify the desire of Faustus, who utters the magnificent apostrophe:—

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium? . . .  
Oh! thou art fairer than the evening air  
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars!

In the final scene our feelings of horror and pity are profoundly stirred by the language of despair and penitence of Faustus; and when he is carried off to the punishment he has purchased, a chorus enters and describes his fate:—

Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,  
And burnéd is Apollo's laurel-bough!

In a soliloquy in *The Jew of Malta*, Barabbas, the greedy merchant, gloats in thought over—

Bags of fiery opals, sapphires, amethysts,  
Jacinths, hard topaz, grass-green emeralds,  
Beauteous rubies, sparkling diamonds;

and his soliloquy ends with the fine line:—

Infinite riches in a little room.

In the historical play of *Edward II.*, he makes the fallen King address these lines to the Earl of Leicester:—

Leicester, if gentle words might comfort me,  
Thy speeches long ago had eased my sorrows;  
For kind and loving hast thou always been.  
The griefs of private men are soon allayed,  
But not of kings. The forest deer, being struck,  
Runs to an herb that closeth up the wounds;  
But, when the imperial lion's flesh is gored,  
He rends and tears it with his wrathful paw,  
And highly scorning that the lowly earth  
Should drink his blood, mounts up into the air.

This might be taken as a foretaste of Shakespeare's play of *Richard II.* In Charles Lamb's opinion the death-scene of Edward II., murdered in Berkeley Castle, "moves pity and terror beyond any scene, ancient or modern, with which I am acquainted."

Making allowance for the language of enthusiastic admiration, there can be no doubt of Marlowe's power and of the height of tragic intensity to which he rises in this scene. On the other hand, Marlowe was, in his earlier days, given to rant. His first play was *Tamburlaine the Great* (1586); and the following is his hero's comment on the illness of his Queen, Zenocrate:—

Black is the beauty of the brightest day;  
The golden ball of heaven's eternal fire,  
That danced with glory on the silver waves,  
Now wants the fuel that inflamed his beams;  
And all with faintness, and for foul disgrace,  
He binds his temples with a frowning cloud,  
Ready to darken earth with endless night.

He proceeds thus to address the fever from which she suffers:—

Proud fury, and intolerable fit,  
That dares torment the body of my love,  
And scourge the scourge of the immortal God!

and on her death exclaims to his friend and ally the King of Fez:—

What! is she dead? Techelles, draw thy sword  
And wound the earth, that it may cleave in twain,  
And we descend into the eternal vaults,  
To hale the Fatal Sisters by the hair,  
And throw them in the triple moat of hell,  
For taking hence my fair Zenocrate.

Marlowe was of a strong and passionate nature; uncontrolled and undisciplined, he gave way to his instincts with a recklessness of will which caused him to shrink from nothing in the domain of thought, and led him into the greatest excesses and irregularities of life. There is a Titanic force and grandeur in his creations—the reflex-product of his own temperament—which it is difficult to parallel in the Elizabethan drama. He goes to the very roots of the primal elements in human nature, with its inordinate desires—"the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"—which hurl on catastrophes. In this lies Marlowe's chief defect as a dramatist. His characters are entirely governed by passion and emotion, and no room is given either for the influence of environment, or for the play of those ethical elements which are such potent factors in the sphere of human action. In this respect

Marlowe stands isolated from the poets and dramatists of his own time; and in his prevailing attitude of dominating self-assertiveness he is the sixteenth-century counterpart of the Byron of a later age.

(i) "Three plays remain (*Tamburlaine*, *Dr. Faustus*, *The Jew of Malta*), and on these three the fame of Marlowe must rest. Each of these is admirably characteristic, and could have proceeded from no other brain than that of its creator. The three together form a great achievement in literature for a man probably not more than twenty-seven years of age when the latest was written; and they still stand apart from the neighbouring crowd of dramatic compositions, and close to one another—a little group distinguished by peculiar marks of closest kinship, a physiognomy and complexion, and demeanour and accent of their own. If Marlowe is the Schiller—the subjective poet, the idealist, as Shakespeare is the Goethe, objective and naturalistic, of Elizabethan art—he is a Schiller of a decidedly Satanic school."—PROFESSOR DOWDEN.

(ii) "Marlowe is a name that stands high, and almost first in this list of dramatic worthies. He was a little before Shakespeare's time, and has a marked character both from him and from the rest. There is a lust of power in his writings, a hunger and thirst after unrighteousness, a glow of the imagination, unhallowed by anything but its own energies. His thoughts burn within him like a furnace with bickering flames; or throwing out black smoke and mists that hide the dawn of genius, or, like a poisonous mineral, corrode the heart."—W. HAZLITT.

(iii) With the exception of *Ferrex and Porrex* (p. 91) Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* is the first English play written in blank verse, and the play that really established blank verse as the medium in the drama. Notwithstanding the faults and defects of the play, its rant and bombast, it held its own, and the new verse was the beginning of a new departure in the form of dramatic art. The sub-title is *The Scythian Shepherd and the Scourge of God*.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ELIZABETHAN POETRY.

1. THE outburst of poetry which we have seen mark the early fifteenth century in Scotland had little counterpart in England. Most of the English poetry of that period is from the hand of those nameless ballad-writers whose work has been reviewed in the fifth chapter. The interval between the writings of the immediate followers of Chaucer and the new era of Italian influence, yields but few names to a survey of English poetry.

First of these in date stands **Stephen Hawes** (1476—1523), who may be regarded as, in some sort, a link between Chaucer and Spenser. Born in the county of Suffolk, he studied at the University of Oxford, and afterwards travelled on the Continent, as was then becoming fashionable. He was appointed Groom of the Chamber to King Henry VII., and seems to have lived till the twelfth year of Henry VIII. To the former monarch he dedicated his *Pastime of Pleasure; or, History of Graund Amoure and La Belle Pucelle*—a somewhat dreary allegorical poem in the Chaucerian seven-line stanza, written about 1506. The following lines show his style:—

O mortall folke ! you may beholde and see  
Howe I lye here, sometimes a mighty knight ;  
The ende of joy and all prosperité  
Is death at last, thorough his course and mighte,  
After the daye there cometh the darke nighte ;  
For, though the daye be never so long,  
At las<sup>t</sup> the belle ringeth to evensong.

It is for the last two lines of this stanza that English literature is most indebted to Stephen Hawes. It embodies an old riming proverb—but in a vivid and musical fashion.

“Hawes is a bad imitator of Lydgate, and ten times more tedious than the original.”—W. SCOTT.



Hawes's contemporary, **Alexander Barclay** (1476—1552), is less original. His best known work is *The Shyp of Follys* (Ship of Fools), printed by Pynson in 1509. This is a translation of Sebastian Brandt's *Das Narrenschiff*, published at Bâle in 1494; but the translator greatly enlarged the German work by the addition of the most noticeable follies to be found amongst his own countrymen. The book is still interesting as a picture of contemporary manners. After having been for some time chaplain to the college of Ottery St. Mary in Devon, he became a monk of the Benedictine order in the monastery of Ely. He died in 1552, aged seventy-six, and was buried at Croydon, where he had passed his youth.

2. A more lively satirist is **John Skelton** (1460—1529). Born in Norfolk, and educated at Cambridge, he acquired such proficiency in classics as to earn the encomiums of Erasmus, who styled him, "*Unum Britannicarum literarum lumen ac decus.*" He also obtained a degree of Laureateship from the University of Oxford before 1490 (which attested his proficiency in poetical compositions), and took holy orders in 1498. About the same time he was appointed by King Henry VII. tutor to Prince Henry, afterwards Henry VIII., and presented soon after to the rectory of Diss, in his native county. This living he retained to his death, which occurred in the Sanctuary of Westminster in June, 1529. Here he had been sheltered by Abbot Islip from the vengeance of Cardinal Wolsey, who was the object of his bitterest satires. His principal works are *The Bowge*<sup>1</sup> of Courte, *The Tunnyng*<sup>2</sup> of Elynour Rummyng, *Phyllyp Sparowe*, *Speke Parrot*, *The Boke of Colyn Cloute*, and *Why Come ye Nat to Courte?* From him Spenser adopted the pseudonym of "Colin Clout." *Phyllyp Sparowe* is a charmingly playful account of the death of a pet sparrow killed by a cat. In his satires he attacks the court vices and the corruptions of the Church; and is unsparing in his attacks on Wolsey, then in the zenith of his power. But

<sup>1</sup> *Bowge* (= *bouche*, mouth) represents the courtier's right of a free table at the King's cost.

<sup>2</sup> *Tunnyng* = brewing. Elynour Rummyng is said to have been an ale-wife in the Surrey village of Leatherhead.

though *The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng* is coarse, there is little in his writings to warrant the epithet "beastly Skelton" applied to him by Pope. He fabricated, as Taine says, "a sort of literary mud, with which he bespatters Wolsey and the bishops." The corresponding Grub Street "mud" Pope himself knew well how to cast. The metre generally employed by Skelton in his satires is highly skilful, if not original, and has, in fact, been named "Skeltonical." It consists of short rimed couplets of five to seven syllables in each line, of irregular accent: they move in a kind of tripping measure, to which alliteration and assonance often lend a peculiar jingling quaintness. This quaintness is intensified by his pedantry, his profuse vocabulary, and his use of archaic and idiomatic words and phrases. The following extract is from *Why Come ye Nat to Courte?*—

The Erle of Northumberlande  
 Dare take nothyng on hande:  
 Our barons be so bolde,  
 Into a mouse hole they wolde  
 Rynne<sup>1</sup> away and crepe,  
 Like a mayny<sup>2</sup> of shepe;  
 Dare nat loke out at dur<sup>3</sup>  
 For drede of the mastyve<sup>4</sup> cur,  
 For drede of the bocher's<sup>5</sup> dogge  
 Wold wyrry<sup>6</sup> them like an hogge.

He appears to have assumed, in right of his degree of Laureate, a badge embroidered with the word "Calliope" in letters of gold; and on being questioned why he did so, replied as follows:—

Calliope  
 As ye may se  
 Regent is she  
 Of poetes al,  
 Which gave to me  
 The high degre  
 Laureat to be  
 Of fame royall;  
 Whose name enrolde  
 With silke and golde  
 I dare be bolde  
 Thus for to were.

<sup>1</sup> run. <sup>2</sup> flock. Old French *mesnie*, a company or a household. <sup>3</sup> door. <sup>4</sup> mastiff.  
<sup>5</sup> butcher's dog; an allusion to Wolsey's alleged parentage. <sup>6</sup> worry.

His chief merit is, that he broke away from the stereotyped forms and the long-drawn dulness of the Lydgate School.

3. **The New Era in Poetry.**—It is not, however, in these echoes of an earlier day that the promise is to be found of the poetry of the Elizabethan age. The first half of the sixteenth century saw the beginning of a new influence and a new era in poetical literature; the latter half saw the full meridian splendour of this new light. The two poets who shone in the foremost hours of the new day of poetry—the first of the “courtly makers,” as they were termed—were Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. These two poets have been called the “twin stars of the dawn,” the “founders of English lyrical poetry”; and Drayton speaks of the latter as—

That princely Surrey, early in the time  
Of the eighth Henry, who was then the prime  
Of England's noble youth, . . .

and he refers to both as—

That time's best makers, and the authors were  
Of those small poems which the titles bear  
Of songs and sonnets, . . .

It is to Wyatt that we owe the introduction into English literature of the sonnet from Italy; and it is to Henry Howard that is due the first employment of blank verse in general poetical composition. These two writers may be regarded as the forerunners of the modern school of English poetry.

4. **Sir Thomas Wyatt** (1503—1542) was born at Allington Castle, in the county of Kent; and at the age of fifteen graduated at St. John's College, Cambridge. He was appointed Gentleman of the King's Bedchamber, and in 1533 was ewerer<sup>1</sup> at the coronation of Anne Boleyn, who had been his personal friend. He was skilled in every accomplishment of the time, especially in fencing, knew and could speak French, Italian, and Spanish, could play on the lute, and was an admirable conversationalist. He was much employed in diplomacy, was sent as Ambassador to the Emperor Charles V., and had many difficult and delicate questions to

<sup>1</sup> The *ewerer* is the gentlemen who carries the silver basin and ewer at a coronation.

negotiate. He had also his share of kingly suspicions and consequent imprisonments. In the year 1542 Charles V. sent an Ambassador to England, and Wyatt was ordered by the King to meet him at Falmouth and convey him to London. Wyatt rode hard and fast through stormy weather, was drenched with rain, took to his bed in a raging fever, and died at the age of thirty-nine. His poems consist of sonnets, lyrics, rondels, and epigrams; and in all, the influence of Italian poets—especially of Petrarch—is very apparent. The spirit of Wyatt's poetry is the spirit of the Renaissance—"its classicism, its harmony, and its appreciation of form." The rough, halting, and long-worded verses of Lydgate and Hawes have disappeared; and in their place have come clearness, smoothness, perfect metre, and charm. The following is a good specimen of Wyatt's metrical art:—

THE LOVER COMPLAINETH TO HIS LUTE THAT HIS LOVE IS UNKIND.

My Lute, awake! perform the last  
Labour that thou and I shall waste,  
And end that I have now begun;  
And when this song is sung and past,  
My Lute! be still, for I have done.  
As to be heard where ear is none;  
As lead to grave in marble stone;  
My song may pierce her heart as soon;  
Should we then sing or sigh or moan?  
No, no, my Lute! for I have done.  
Now cease, my Lute! This is the last  
Labour that thou and I shall waste;  
And ended is that we begun;  
Now is thy song both sung and past;  
My Lute! be still, for I have done.

Wyatt the poet is generally called "the elder," to distinguish him from his son, Sir Thomas Wyatt the younger, who headed the rebellion against the "Spanish marriage" (between Philip II. of Spain and Mary I. of England), and led the men of Kent against London. He was executed in 1554.

5. **The Earl of Surrey** (1518—1547) was the grandson of the second Duke of Norfolk, who defeated James IV. of Scotland on Flodden Field in 1413. He was a soldier and a courtier, spent a year at the French Court, and joined in several military expeditions. In 1545 he was Governor of Boulogne. In 1547 he was

brought before a packed jury, and tried for having "falsely, maliciously, and treacherously set up and borne the arms of Edward the Confessor, then used by the Prince of Wales, mixed up and joined with his own proper arms." The charge was a trumped-up one; Surrey had borne these arms many times in the presence of the King himself—arms which the family had received from Richard II., and had borne for generations. But Henry VIII. was in one of his furious fits of jealousy; he had conceived the suspicion that the Duke of Norfolk, Surrey's father, hoped to succeed him on the throne; he ordered both father and son to be thrown into the Tower; and on January 21st, 1547, Surrey was beheaded on Tower Hill at the early age of thirty. Much sentiment and criticism (increased, no doubt, by Fitztravers's song in Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*) have been expended on the romantic attachment of Surrey for the "Fair Geraldine," which called forth his well-known sonnet—

From Tuscan came my Lady's worthy race.

Her father was Gerald, ninth Earl of Kildare, who died in the Tower, and she seems to have been but a child of twelve when Surrey saw her; but the fair daughter of a persecuted house appealed to Surrey's chivalrous nature, and gave birth to poetic effusions after the manner of his time.

His poems consist chiefly of lyrics and sonnets, and he also translated into blank verse the second and the fourth books of the *Aeneid*. The following lines furnish an example of his translation:—

At the threshold of her chamber door,  
The Carthage lords did on the Queen attend,  
The trampling steed, with gold and purple trapt,  
Chawing the foamy bit there fiercely stood.  
Then issued she, awaited with great train,  
Clad in a cloak of Tyre embradred rich.  
Her quiver hung behind her back, her tress  
Knotted in gold, her purple vesture eke  
Butned with gold, the Troyans of her train  
Before her go, with gladsome Iulus.

In most respects he was a pupil and follower of Wyatt, who was fourteen years his senior. He is the first English writer who



used blank verse—that verse which was destined to become the powerful instrument of England's greatest poets. Surrey's verse has the qualities of perfect clearness, grace, vivacity, and picturesqueness. It is always smooth and often melodious. The following is a fair specimen of his style:—

IN PRAISE OF HIS LOVE.

Give place, ye lovers, here before  
 That spent your boasts and brags in vain;  
 My lady's beauty passeth more  
 The best of yours, I dare well sayen,  
 Than doth the sun the candle light,  
 Or brightest day the darkest night. . . .  
 Sith<sup>1</sup> Nature thus gave her the praise,  
 To be the chiefest work she wrought;  
 In faith! methinks, some better ways  
 On your behalf might well be sought,  
 Than to compare, as ye have done,  
 To match the candle with the sun.

(i) Warton quotes this poem with special commendation for the correctness of its versification, the polish of its language, and its musical modulation.

(ii) None of the poems of Wyatt and Surrey were published during their lifetime: they were handed about and read in manuscript. Ten years after the execution of Surrey, that is, in 1557, the poems of both writers first appeared in print in *Tottel's Miscellany*—the first anthology of English poetry ever published. This volume was edited by Nicholas Grimald (who inserted forty of his own poems), chaplain to Bishop Ridley, and a lecturer on rhetoric in the University of Oxford.

(iii) This group of new poets excelled in short poems—lyrics and sonnets—or, in the language of that day, in writing “in small parcels.”

(iv) “An English Petrarch: no juster title could be given to Surrey, for it expresses his talent as well as his disposition.”—Taine.

6. **George Gascoigne** (1536—1577) was the son of Sir John Gascoigne, of Bedfordshire, and his name is of some note in the history of literature. He was educated, as he informs us, at Cambridge, and was admitted to Gray's Inn in 1555. He was a lawyer, a soldier, and a poet; but his father, a knight of good estate, disinherited him for extravagance. Gascoigne sat in the House of Commons for Bedford during two Parliaments, and “lived with a splendour of expense to which his means were unequal.” He was present at the famous Festival of Kenilworth, given in July,

<sup>1</sup> Sith = since.

1575, to Queen Elizabeth by the Earl of Leicester, and was commissioned by the latter to write some of the poetry for the masques presented there. His verses were printed the following year under the title of *The Princely Pleasures at the Courte of Kenelworth*. His best known poem is *The Steele Glas*, a satire in 1,100 lines of blank verse, which indirectly recommends to all the advantages of a simple and manly life. He complains of the "christol glas" that it—

Glimseth brave and bright,  
And shewes the thing, much better than it is,

and recommends the use of the "steele glas" (mirror), which is faithful and shows men and things as they truly are. But in addition to the authorship of this poem—

In rymelesse verse, which thundreth mighty threatens,

Gascoigne has a very remarkable literary record. He is credited with having written the first comedy in English prose (*The Supposes*, a translation from Ariosto), the first English satire in blank verse (*The Steele Glas*), the first translation of a Greek play (*Jocasta*, adapted from the *Phoenissae* of Euripides), and the first critical essay—on *The Making of Verse*. These were first attempts, though two were only translations, at different kinds of English literature, and some of them were successful. In *The Steele Glas* he satirises the extravagance of the ladies of the court :—

The elder sorte, go stately stalking on,  
And on their backs they beare both land and fee  
Castles and Towres, revènewes and receits,  
Lordships and manours, fines, yea fermes and al.

And he handles rime and ordinary metre with considerable power :—

Then like the lark that passed the night  
In heavy sleep with cares opprest,  
Yet when she spies the pleasant light,  
She sends sweet notes from out her breast ;  
So sing I now because I think  
How joys approach when sorrows shrink.

He gives us, now and then, a specimen of forcible alliteration :—

They mar with musk the balm which Nature made,  
And dig for death in delicatest dishes.

"Master George Gascoine, a wittie gentleman and the chefe of our late rymers, who and if some partes of learning wanted not (albee it is well knowen he altogythèr wanted not learning) no doubt would have attayned to the excellencye of those famous Poets. For gifts of wit and naturall promptnesse appeare in hym abundantly."—SPENSER.

7. **Thomas Sackville** (1536—1608) (Lord Buckhurst), another of the "courtly makers," was born at Buckhurst, in Sussex, an estate which had been held by his family since the time of the Conquest. He was educated both at Oxford and Cambridge, and in due course was entered of the Inner Temple. He had a seat in Parliament in 1557-8, and was for many years one of the chief councillors of Queen Elizabeth, and afterwards of James I. In December, 1561, he and another writer, Thomas Norton, produced before the benchers and barristers of the Inner Temple the tragedy of *Gorboduc* (see p. 91). He died in 1608, while sitting at the council-table in Whitehall. His place in English literature is fixed by two poems which were printed in the *Mirror for Magistrates*. These are *The Complaint of Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham*, and the *Induction* (Introduction). They display a stronger, bolder, and more picturesque style than had been seen in England since the death of Chaucer. A new dignity, nay, even stateliness and majesty, appear in his verses; and Spenser has acknowledged his indebtedness to Sackville,

Whose learned Muse hath writ her own record  
In golden verse, worthy immortal fame.

The poems are written in rime-royal—the seven-line stanza so ably handled by Chaucer—and there are two hundred stanzas in the two poems. The following lines will serve as examples of this poet's manner and power: Sorrow is supposed to act as guide to the poet through the realm of Hades:—

For forth she paced in her fearful tale:  
"Come, come," quoth she, "and see what I shall show;  
Come hear the plaining and the bitter bale  
Of worthy men by Fortune overthrow:  
Come thou, and see them rueing all in row,  
They were but shades that erst in mind thou roll'd:  
Come, come with me, thine eyes shall them behold."

The following stanza is from *The Complaint of Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham*:—

So long as Fortune<sup>1</sup> would permit the same  
 I lived in rule and riches with the best :  
 And passed my time in honour and in fame,  
 That of mishap no fear was in my breast :  
 But false Fortune, when I suspected least,  
 Did turn the wheel, and with a doleful fall  
 Hath me bereft of honour, life, and all.

(i) The *Mirroure for Magistrates* was planned by a William Baldwyne, of Oxford, "a priest, a scholar, and a printer," as a sort of sequel to Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*. It was intended to show on how little high rank had to rely—a mere smile; and how easy it was for persons "in great place" to fall into the direst misery. The *Mirroure* was to contain a series of such tragedies selected from English history, beginning with the time of William the Conqueror. The word "Mirroure" was commonly used in the sense of warning; cf. "Hecuba the sorrowfullest wretch that ever lived to make a *mirroure* of."

(ii) Though the *Induction* introduces the usual allegorical personages, Renown, Revenge, Misery, Famine, War, etc., yet the poetry is far in advance of the time when these were the commonplace properties of poetical writers. Sackville is very much nearer to Spenser than to Stephen Hawes. |

8. We have seen the first beginnings of lyrical poetry in England in the writings of Wyatt and Surrey, who introduced the Sonnet from Italy. The lyrical form, which seems to spring so naturally from southern soil, was thus not of indigenous growth in our northern clime; but how rapidly it captured the national taste, what a wonderful revolution it worked in English poetry, is apparent not alone in the work of the greater Elizabethan poets, but in that unparalleled outburst of song, preserved for us in collections in the British Museum and the University libraries, which graced the England of Elizabeth with "a fervid choir that lifted up a noise of harmony." Many of these exquisite lyrics are the work of nameless writers; of the authors of others we know little but the name; but a musical influence was by them exerted on English poetry and on English speech, whose echoes are still audible alike in the best poetry and prose of the present day. LL

9. Sir Philip Sidney (1554—1586).—At the head of the new Sack

<sup>1</sup> The word *fortune* in Sackville has the accent either on the first or second syllable, as suits his convenience. This shows that the accentuation of the language was not, in the sixteenth century, yet firmly fixed. As we find in Chaucer *bâttaille* and *battaille*, *languaige* and *language*, etc., so even in Shakespeare the accent is unstable. He gives us *cómpete* and *compleète*, *désprésed* and *despiséd*, *exáct* and *éxact*, *obscúre* and *óbscure*, *prófound* and *profóund*.



school of lyrical poetry stands the name of Sir Philip Sidney. His poems, as we have seen (p. 74), preceded in date of publication both the *Arcadia* and the *Apologie*. Sidney had thoroughly imbibed the Italian spirit, and as Dante dedicates his music to Beatrice, and Petrarch to Laura, so Sidney devotes his poems to Stella. This was Penelope Devereux, daughter of the Earl of Essex, whom, like Dante with Beatrice and Surrey with the Fair Geraldine, he first met (1575) when she was merely a child, and only twelve years old; and with whom, soon after, an informal engagement of marriage took place. The engagement does not seem to have been prosecuted with any ardour on the part of Sidney, possibly owing to the financial straits in which he found himself; and in 1581, four years after its announcement, the lady was contracted to Lord Rich, whom she married in the early summer of that year. The news of this second engagement seems to have persuaded Sidney that he was desperately enamoured of his betrothed, and to her, when the wife of another, he addressed that beautiful series of sonnets, *Astrophel to Stella*, by which a lucky accident, it may be said, has thus enriched our literature. That his passion, if vehement, was not long-lived, may be inferred from the fact that within two years he was married to the daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham. None the less true are the lines of Ben Jonson that in the *Astrophel to Stella*—

| Hath our great Sidney Stella set  
| Where never star shone brighter yet!

The date and sequence of the sonnets have given rise to much controversy, but probably those numbered one to thirty were written before the marriage of Stella, the remainder after that event. They are interspersed with songs, some of them of considerable lyrical beauty, though often spoiled by the mannerisms of the time. The sonnets, too, betray an external varnish of conventionality, but many seem to express genuine feeling, and some are written with pure originality. Of his style Crashaw speaks as "Sidneian showers of sweet discourse"; and, though Pope slightly remarks that "Sidney's verse halts ill on Roman feet," Browning has aptly characterised it as—

| the silver speech  
| Of Sidney's self, the starry Paladin.



The best known of the sonnets, and one of the finest in the English tongue, is the thirty-first, commencing—

With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the skies !

The following verses form part of a lyric, probably written on the occasion of the marriage of Stella to Lord Rich :—

Ring out your bells, let mourning shows be spread ;  
For Love is dead :

All love is dead, infected  
With plague of deep disdain :  
Worth, as naught worth, rejected,  
And faith fair scorn doth gain.

From so ungrateful fancy,  
From such a female frenzy,  
From them that use men thus,  
Good Lord, deliver us !

Weep, neighbours, weep ; do you not hear it said  
That Love is dead ?

His deathbed, peacock's folly ;  
His winding sheet is shame ;  
His will, false seeming holy ;  
His sole executor, blame.

From so ungrateful fancy,  
From such a female frenzy,  
From them that use men thus,  
Good Lord, deliver us !

10. **Sir Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke** (1554—1628).—With the name of Sidney is intimately connected that of his cousin, school-fellow, and college companion, Fulke Greville. He became a favourite courtier of Queen Elizabeth, and was Chancellor of the Exchequer to James I. He was stabbed September 1st, 1628, by one of his servants, Ralph Haywood—a witness to his will, in which he had bequeathed no legacy to the man—and died on the 30th of the same month. His epitaph, of his own composition, reads :—"Fulke Greville, Servant to Queen Elizabeth, Chancellor to King James, and Friend to Sir Philip Sidney." He wrote two Senecan tragedies, *Alaham* and *Mustapha*, which, remarks Charles Lamb, "might with more propriety have been termed political treatises than plays." A late writer has said of them : "The sheer power of mind shown in these strange plays . . . is undeniable. But generally we find this inborn power struggling

with a medium of expression so cumbrous and intricate and stumbling, that neither thought nor fancy can find their way through it!" He is best known by the collection of sonnets and other poems published under the title *Caelica*, from which we quote the following:—

Cupid, my pretty boy, leave off thy crying,  
 Thou shalt have bells or apples, be not peevish;  
 Kiss me, sweet lad; beshrew her for denying;  
 Such rude denials do make children thievish.

Tell me, sweet boy, doth Myra's beauty threaten?  
 Must you say grace when you would be a-playing?  
 Doth she cause thee make faults, to make thee beaten?  
 Is Beauty's pride in innocents' betraying?  
 Give me a bow, let me thy quiver borrow,  
 And she shall play the child with Love or Sorrow.

✓ **II. Edmund Spenser (1552—1599).**—By far the greatest name amongst Elizabethan poets, outside dramatic writers, is that of Edmund Spenser, in modern times well named the "Poets' Poet." That this is no fancy title is evidenced by the extraordinary influence which he has exerted on poets from Shakespeare to Tennyson. His merits were not unrecognised by his immediate successors.

Whom through all the Graces and the Muses nursed,  
 is the description of him by Phineas Fletcher. He—

Found for poetry a richer vein,

says Dryden. But it is amongst modern poets that we meet the most appreciative estimate of his merits as a poet. He is to Thomson—

The gentle Spenser, Fancy's pleasing son.

Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven  
 With the moon's beauty, and the moon's soft pace,

graphically exclaims Wordsworth. Scott speaks of "Spenser's magic tale" and "Spenser's elfin dream"; Shelley pays tribute to—

Shakespeare, Sidney, Spenser, and the rest  
 Who made our land an island of the blest;

and Landor tells how—

Spenser shed over me his sunny dreams.

Keats has in his own music caught the echo of—

Spenserian vowels that elope with ease  
And float along like birds on summer seas;

and our late Laureate, Lord Tennyson, is the lineal poetic descendant of him whose lines are the first of—

those melodious bursts that fill  
The spacious times of great Elizabeth  
With sounds that echo still.

12. **His Career.**—The "Poets' Poet" was born in London in the last year of King Edward VI., and his childhood was passed in the gloomy days of the first Mary. He was thus six years old when Elizabeth came to the throne, and was twelve years the senior of Shakespeare. His family, though not well off, was connected with the Spencers of Althorpe. Spenser became a pupil of Merchant Taylors' School, which he left in 1569 for Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, where he was admitted sizar on May 20th. It is believed that he translated some of Petrarch's sonnets into English verse in the year in which he left school. Like Pope, he may be said to have—

Lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came;

and we may add in his own later words:—

The numbers flow as fast as spring doth rise.

He left Cambridge with the degree of Master of Arts in 1576. In 1579 we find him in the household of the Earl of Leicester, uncle to Sir Philip Sidney, whose acquaintance Spenser had made, and with whom he is said to have been on terms of affectionate companionship. On December 5th, 1579, was entered at Stationers' Hall, under the *nom de plume* of "Immerito," a series of twelve Aeglogues, as they were then termed, bearing the title of *The Shepheard's Calendar*. The taste for pastorals, derived from classical sources, had set in; and shepherds and shepherdesses were as much in vogue as at the courts of the later Louis. Spenser and his friends appear under rustic names; the author himself adopts from Skelton that of Colin Clout; Hobbinol is his friend Gabriel Harvey; and Elizabeth is the "Queene of Shepheardes all," daughter of Pan and Syrinx. The anonymous work, which gives promise only of that which was to come, at once attracted public

favour, and was by some attributed to Sir Philip Sidney himself, to whom it was dedicated. The poems seem to have brought one advantage to their author. Lord Grey of Wilton had just been appointed Lord Deputy in Ireland, and he took with him as secretary to that then truly "distressful country" Edmund Spenser. The times were more than usually troublesome. The great Desmond Rebellion, fanned by Spanish and papal support, was in full progress, and the fort of Smerwick, on the Kerry coast, was held by Spanish adventurers. Spenser was probably with his chief at the disaster of Glenmalure, and we have his own word for his presence soon after at the ruthless massacre of the garrison of Smerwick. While Lord Grey remained in Ireland, his secretary shared in the patronage bestowed by him on his followers: he was appointed, in 1581, Clerk of Decrees to the Irish Court of Chancery, and to other minor offices. In 1582 Lord Grey was recalled and was succeeded by Sir John Perrot, from whom, as a stranger, the poet could expect but little preferment. We find him, however, in 1589 acting as Deputy Clerk to the Council of Munster, when the great scheme for the plantation of that province by the "Undertakers" was on foot. The rising courtier, Walter Raleigh, was now in Ireland, and Spenser had made his acquaintance. Whether by the protection of the royal favourite or from his own influential official position we know not, Spenser was assigned 3,000 acres of the forfeited lands of the Desmonds, with the manor and ruined castle of Kilcolman, in the county of Cork. The great poem of *The Faerie Queene* had been commenced by him before he had set foot in Ireland; but it was in Kilcolman Castle that it was mainly written, and it is profoundly influenced by the surroundings, physical and moral, amid which it was composed. Before the end of 1589 Spenser was visited at Kilcolman by Raleigh, and to his judgment the first three books of the poem were submitted. On Raleigh's return to London he took Spenser with him, and introduced him at court. The poet's skilful flattery of Queen Elizabeth was rewarded by her with a pension of £50 a year. In 1590 the first instalment of the poem appeared, with a crowd of prefatory sonnets soliciting courtly patronage. The work itself was dedicated to the Queen, with



the inscription, equalling in boldness as in prescience, the *aere perennius* of Horace:—

To live with the eternitie of her fame.

Twelve months after the publication of the first three books of *The Faerie Queene* appeared a volume of *Complaints*, comprising his early translations, *The Ruines of Time*, and other pieces. Six months later Spenser was again at Kilcolman, having found his court patrons an unreliable means of livelihood, and again occupied with his duties of Clerk to the Council of Munster, a post which he relinquished in 1593. The following year he married Elizabeth Boyle, kinswoman to the "great" Earl of Cork, and celebrated his wooing in his *Amoretti*, a collection of sonnets; while to his nuptials he dedicated his *Epithalamion*, the greatest wedding ode in any tongue, wherein Spenser shows an unwonted concentration of style and mastery of language and of metre. Three children were born of this marriage, two of whom, characteristically named Sylvanus and Peregrine, survived their father. In 1595 Spenser again visited London for the purpose of publishing his *Sonnets*, which were entered at Stationers' Hall in November of that year. The second instalment of *The Faerie Queene*, completing six books of the poem, was entered for publication the following January. In addition to these were published during the year 1596, which he seems to have spent in London, *Fowre Hymnes* on Love and Beauty, and the famous *Prothalamion*, or spousal ode, on the double marriage of the sisters Lady Elizabeth and Lady Catharine Somerset, daughters of the Earl of Worcester, which ranks with the *Epithalamion* in excellence of execution.

Once more disappointed in the hopes of court preferment, he found, in his own words, "What hell it is in sueing long to bide," and returned to Ireland in 1597, with the intention, as hinted in the *Prothalamion*, of spending the remainder of his days at Kilcolman. But this was not to be. Hugh O'Neill, Tyrone, an abler and craftier leader than any Irish chieftain who had yet arisen, now headed a great confederation against the English power. Three provinces were soon in arms; Munster alone was apparently quiet. But in August, 1598, Tyrone completely defeated a large English force under Sir Henry Bagenal at the battle of



the Yellow Ford, near Armagh. This was the signal for the invasion of Munster by the victorious Irish: the dispossessed population swarmed from their fastnesses, and a body of native Irish from the Wood of Aherlow surprised and burned Kilcolman Castle. Spenser, his wife, and their two elder children succeeded in making their escape, but the youngest perished in the flames. Heartbroken and worn out with disappointments and misfortunes, the poet died on January 16th, 1599, at an inn in King Street, Westminster, and was laid at rest in the Abbey hard by, close to the grave of Chaucer, his great forerunner, the cost of the funeral being borne by his patron, the Earl of Essex.

13. **His Work.**—Spenser left a notable contribution to English poetry, till then unequalled since the death of Chaucer, and scarcely surpassed since that of Shakespeare. As he is the last and greatest of mediæval poets in England, so are his faults essentially mediæval, being chiefly prolixity, absence of a sense of proportion, and lack of concentration on important points. He was deeply impressed by the Italian school, which first determined his choice of the pastoral as his medium of poetic expression. Petrarch had founded his style on Theocritus, and had been copied by Mantuanus (translated by Alexander Barclay) and Sannazaro, whose *Arcadia* probably inspired that of Sidney. Spenser's early translations of Petrarch and du Bellay would naturally influence him to cast his writings in the mould of the pastoral, and to select the sonnet as a vehicle for much of his verse. But in choosing the pastoral it was not the conventional and courtly form which he adopted—the pastoral of Watteau shepherdesses with classical names. With a fine appreciation of the spirit of English poetry, he reverted, in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, to the rustic pastoral; his *dramatis personæ* are not Chloe and Phillis, Melibœus or Sylvius, but Rosalind and Bonnibell, Diggon Davie and Colin Clout; while the royal Eliza, as we have said, is "Queene of Shepherdes all," and Raleigh figures later under the strange title of "Shepherd of the Ocean." The scenery and surroundings, too, are English; a "tawdrie lace" girds the waist of the maiden, and the following beautiful stanza is a veritable posy of old English flowers:—

Bring hither the pincke and purple cullambine  
 With gelliflowres<sup>1</sup>;  
 Bring coronations, and sops in wine,<sup>2</sup> . . .  
 Strowe me the ground with daffadowndillies  
 And cowslips, and kingcups,<sup>3</sup> and loved lillies:  
 The pretie pawnee<sup>4</sup>:  
 And the chevisaunce<sup>5</sup>  
 Shall match with the fair floure delice.<sup>6</sup>

So anxious is he to be English that, like William Morris in our own day, he is consciously and deliberately archaic.<sup>7</sup> He borrows the phraseology of Chaucer, even if he sometimes misunderstands his expressions.

Archaisms are plentifully scattered over *The Faerie Queene*, in which the faults of prolixity and diffuseness are much in evidence. It has been remarked that few lines are quoted from Spenser owing to his lack of concentration. "Very few, and very weary," exclaims Lord Macaulay, "are those who are in at the death of the Blatant Beast." And from this it would appear that, even in its incompleteness as we have it, *The Faerie Queene* was too large a mouthful for the omnivorous essayist himself, as the death of the Blatant Beast never occurs in the poem! Though he is suppressed and bound by doughty Calidore—

he broke his yron chaine,  
 And got into the world at liberty againe . . .  
 And rageth sore in each degree and state.

14. *The Faerie Queene*.—*The Faerie Queene* is remarkable for the metre in which it is written—a stanza of the poet's own creation, since known as the Spenserian stanza. It is partly suggested by the sonnet, and consists of eight lines of ten

<sup>1</sup> the clove-scented pink or lesser carnation.

<sup>2</sup> the common garden pink, used to flavour wine.

<sup>3</sup> either the common buttercup or marsh marigold.

<sup>4</sup> the pansy.

<sup>5</sup> a flower unidentified, possibly the wallflower.

<sup>6</sup> the French fleur de lis, or lily.

<sup>7</sup> He draws on the dialect of the "North countrie" for such terms as *uncle* = uncle, *fang* = catch, *flyte* = chide. He takes from Chaucer's line—

In durring don that longeth to a knight (*Tr. & Cr.* v. 837)

(that is, In daring to do what belongeth to a knight), the expression "derring-do," which he connects with a hyphen, and turns into a noun—an error reproduced by Sir Walter Scott in his novel of *Ivanhoe*.

syllables each followed by one of twelve. The lines of each stanza which rime together are the first and third; the second, fourth, fifth, and seventh; and the sixth, eighth, and ninth; or, *a b a b b c b c c*. The language, despite archaisms, is wonderfully smooth and beautiful; the imaginative power displayed is remarkable; but the general structure and plan of the poem are too complicated to admit of its ever becoming popular. It was meant by the poet to be a profound allegory, of which Christian morality and Platonic philosophy form the woof, the web being combined of chivalrous ideals, knights, monsters, and enchanters, figuring the real historical and political personages of Spenser's time and country. In a letter to his friend and patron, Sir Walter Raleigh, he thus seeks to explain the "continued Allegory, or darke Conceit" of the poem, wherein he says he has followed Homer, Virgil, Ariosto, and Tasso, and to the two latter poets he is largely indebted for its conception: "The general end therefore of all the Booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline: which for that I conceived should be most plausible and pleasing . . . I chose the Historie of King Arthur. . . . In that Faerie Queene I mean Glory in my generall intention, but in my particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our soveraine the Queene. . . . And yet in some places els, I doe otherwise shadow her. For considering she beareth two persons, the one of a most royal Queene or Empresse, the other of a most vertuous and beautifull Lady, this latter part in some places I doe express in Belphoebe."

15. **The Scope of The Faerie Queene.**—The poem, as designed, was to consist of twelve books, setting forth twelve moral virtues, of which, as we have seen, but six were completed; and, saving a fragment of the seventh, no portion of the rest ever saw publication, nor is it probable that any substantial progress was ever made with them. As each book was divided into twelve cantos, averaging over fifty stanzas each, it is easy to imagine how unwieldy the completed work would have been. The first book, *The Legend of the Knight of the Red Crosse or of Holinesse*, alone contains over 5,500 lines!

It is strange, as Dean Church remarks, that "the first great English poem of modern times—the first creation of English

imaginative power since Chaucer, and, like Chaucer, so thoroughly and characteristically English—was not written in England.” And not only so: it is deeply coloured by Spenser’s Irish environment. Beautiful as he found her, Ireland was still to the English poet “savage soil,” whose woods harboured the outlaw and the felon. His patron, Lord Grey of Wilton, was to him Arthegall, “none other than his own ideal knight”; and doubtless that unwavering faith in Elizabeth and Protestantism which saw in Mary Queen of Scots the false Duessa, and in Philip of Spain the tyrant Grantorto, would identify Desmond and Tyrone with Malengin or Sans Foy. Thus through the six books Religion and Heresy, Temperance and Sensuality, Chastity and Lust, Friendship and Disloyalty, Justice and Lawlessness, Courtesy and Savagery, play out their mimic struggle; and the manifold threads of the allegory are woven into a bewildering tissue, wherein Alva and Henry of Navarre, no less than Norfolk and Raleigh, can be dimly recognised.

The poem suffers from faults of construction, from the want of a central principle, from the lack of unity. Were it not for Spenser’s letter to Raleigh, we would see little in *The Faerie Queene* but six loosely connected stories, interspersed with beautiful descriptions of Irish scenery, much English and foreign politics, and lengthy disquisitions on philosophic and political theories. But though the present-day reader may think it a maze without a plan, it contains much true and noble poetry; and he who does not demand from it that which it has not to give—unity of conception or arrangement—will find in it many a lofty thought and vigorous description. Even humour is not altogether absent; for we have in Braggadochio the prototype of Shakespeare’s Parolles and Ben Jonson’s Captain Bobadil. But the distinguishing feature of the poem is Spenser’s unrivalled sense of beauty, translated by him into language as beautiful. Nothing had been written in English before his time to equal this song from the Second Book:—

The whiles some one did chaunt this lovely lay;  
 Ah! see, whose fayre thing doest faine to see,  
 In springing flowre the image of thy day!  
 Ah! see the virgin rose, how sweetly shee  
 Doth first peepe forth with bashful modestee,



That fairer seemes the lesse ye see her may!

Lo! see soone after how more bold and free  
Her baréd bosome she doth broad display;  
Lo! see soone after how she fades and falls away!

So passeth in the passing of a day  
Of mortall life the leafe, the bud, the flowre;  
Ne more doth florish after first decay  
That erst was sought to deck both bed and bowre  
Of many a lady and many a paramowre!  
Gather therefore the rose whilest yet is prime<sup>1</sup>  
For soone comes age that will her pride deflowre:  
Gather the rose of love whilest yet is time,  
Whilest loving thou mayst lovéd be with equall crime.

Again, for force of imaginative description it would be hard to excel the following picture of Despair:—

That darksome cave they enter, where they find  
That curséd man, low sitting on the ground,  
Musing full sadly in his sullein mind:  
His griesie lockes, long growen and unbound,  
Disordred hong about his shoulders round,  
And hid his face; through which his hollow eyne  
Lookt deadly dull, and staréd as astound;  
His raw-bone cheekes, through penurie and pine,  
Were shronke into his jawes, as he did never dine.

His garment, nought but many ragged clouts,  
With thornes together pin'd and patchéd was,  
The which his naked sides he wrapt abouts:  
And him beside there lay upon the gras,  
A dreary corse, whose life away did pas,  
All wallowd in his own yet luke-warme blood,  
That from his wound yet welléd fresh, alas!  
In which a rusty knife fast fixé stood,  
And made an open passage for the gushing flood.

This should be compared with Chaucer's equally powerful description of the Temple of Mars in *The Knight's Tale*.

16. **Minor Poems.**—To see Spenser at his best, however, we must go to the *Prothalamion* and *Epithalamion*, in which he overcomes to some extent his faults of diffuseness, and of which the language is free from affectation—in fact, the language of the day when they were written.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Herrick's lines beginning:

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may.



So ended she ; and all the rest around  
 To her redoubled that her undersong,  
 Which said, their brydale daye should not be long  
 And gentle Eccho from the neighbour ground  
 Their accents did resound.  
 So forth those ioyous Birdes did passe along  
 Adowne the Lee, that to them murmurde low,  
 As he would speake but that he lackt a tong,  
 Yet did by signes his glad affection show,  
 Making his streame run slow.  
 And all the foule which in his flood did dwell  
 Gan flock about these twaine that did excell  
 The rest, so far as Cynthia doth shend<sup>1</sup>  
 The lesser stars. So they enragéd well  
 Did on those two attend,  
 And their best service lend  
 Against their wedding day, which was not long :  
 Sweet Themmes ! runne softly, till I end my song.

—*Prothalamion.*

But this was for the nuptials of others ; and, in spite of his early passion for "Rosalinde," Spenser's love for his wife seems to have occupied "the whole fulness of his heart" ; and in his *Epithalamion* we have the wedding bells chiming for his own marriage day. "It is a strain," says Professor Palgrave, "redolent of a bridegroom's joy and of a poet's fancy. . . . Pouring forth all his exuberance, allusive and descriptive, with a refined picturesqueness worthy of Shakespeare in his own age, of Keats or Tennyson in ours ;—the invention so copious, the form so beautiful, the melody so resonant, as fairly to resemble the Allegro with which Beethoven's orchestra is wont to close a symphony. I do not know any other nuptial song, ancient or modern, of equal beauty."

Ah ! when will this long weary day have end,  
 And lende me leave to come unto my Love ?  
 How slowly do the houres theyr numbers spend ?  
 How slowly does sad Time his feathers move ?  
 Hastee thee, O fayrest Planet, to thy home  
 Within the Westernne some :  
 Thy tyred steeds long since have need of rest.  
 Long though it be, at last I see it gloome,  
 And the bright Evening-star with golden creast  
 Appear out of the East.  
 Fayre childe of beauty, glorious lampe of Love !

<sup>1</sup> reproach or shame.

That all the host of heaven in rankes doost lead,  
 And guidest Lovers through the night's sad dread,  
 How chearefully thou lookest from above,  
 And seemst to laugh atweene thy twinkling light,  
 As ioying in the sight  
 Of these glad many, which for ioy do sing,  
 That all the woods them answer, and their eccho ring.

—*Epithalamion.*

In *Mother Hubbard's Tale* we have a satire on the time—courtiers, clergy, militarists, alike feel the shafts of his censure. *The Ruines of Time* and *Astrophel* both refer to the Sidney family. The former recounts the fortunes of the House of Sidney; the latter is an elegy, not in Spenser's best style, on the untimely death of the chief ornament of that house. *The Tears of the Muses* bewails the low estate of literature; and *Muiopotmos*<sup>1</sup> is a playful mock-heroic on the death of a butterfly in a spider's web.

Spenser has had many disciples, but few imitators; indeed, the two Fletchers alone may be taken to represent the latter; while, as we have said, the former may be found in the foremost ranks of literature from Shakespeare to Tennyson. ✕

17. From the list of Elizabethan poets must not be omitted the name of **Christopher Marlowe**, whose dramatic works have been dealt with on p. 98. In addition to these Marlowe has enriched English literature with a fragment of the poem of *Hero and Leander*, translated by him from the Greek of Musaeus,<sup>2</sup> and with an extremely spirited rendering of the First Book of Lucan.<sup>3</sup> Swinburne asserts of the former "only not faultless" poem that it "stands out alone amid all the wide and wild poetic wealth of its teeming and turbulent age, as might a small shrine of Parian sculpture amid the rank splendour of a tropic jungle"; and speaks elsewhere of "the absence of all cumbrous jewels and ponderous embroideries from the sweet and limpid loveliness of its style." Few poems seem to have gained more popularity in the Elizabethan age. It is frequently referred to in contemporary literature; it

<sup>1</sup> *Muiopotmos*, from the Greek *μῦα*, a fly, and *πῶτος*, fate.

<sup>2</sup> Musaeus, a Greek grammarian who lived about the fifth century of the Christian era.

<sup>3</sup> Lucan: Marcus Annaeus Lucanus, a Latin poet born at Cordova, Spain, A.D. 39, author of the *Pharsalia*, an epic in ten books on the subject of the civil war between Pompey and Julius Caesar.

is quoted by Shakespeare and Ben Jonson ; its couplets were sung by the oarsmen on the Thames, as we learn from Taylor the Water Poet, and it was continued and completed by George Chapman. There seems little doubt that death cut short the ill-starred poet's intention of finishing the translation ; as, in addition to the first and second "Sestiads"<sup>1</sup> (into which Chapman divides the poem), which had been separately published as the work of Marlowe, tradition states that he had written about a hundred lines of a third, which some critics suppose to form portion of the Fifth Book, or Sestiad. In *Hero and Leander* we find much more of Marlowe than of Musaeus ; it shows also the power and freedom with which he uses the heroic metre :—

It lies not in our power to love or hate,  
For will in us is overruled by fate.  
When two are stript, long ere the race begin,  
We wish that one should lose, the other win :  
And one especially do we affect  
Of two gold ingots, like in each respect :  
The reason no man knows : let it suffice  
What we behold is censured by our eyes.  
Where both deliberate, the love is slight :  
Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight ?

Indeed, in both of these translations the "mighty line" of the Elizabethan poet is as recognisable as in his dramas. The following powerful passage is from Lucan :—

Strange sights appeared ; the angry threatening gods  
Filled both the earth and seas with prodigies.  
Great store of strange and unknown stars were seen  
Wandering about the north, and rings of fire  
Fly in the air, and dreadful bearded stars,  
And comets that presage the fall of kingdoms ;  
The flattering sky glittered in often flames,  
And sundry fiery meteors blazed in heaven,  
Now spear-like long, now like a spreading torch ;  
Lightning in silence stole forth without clouds,  
And, from the northern climate snatching fire,  
Blasted the Capitol.

<sup>1</sup> Sestiad, from Sestos, a town on the Hellespont, in which the action of the poem is laid.

## CHAPTER IX.

---

### WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMATISTS.

1. **His Early Years.**—We know very little of the life of our greatest poet; and it is not easy to construct, out of the dramatic and impersonal materials he has left to us, any very clear or self-consistent idea of his personal character. We know, from the evidence of his contemporaries, that he was amiable, kindly, and sweet-tempered; but we do not know much more. Matthew Arnold says:—

Others abide\* our question—thou art free!  
We ask and ask. Thou smilest and art still.  
And thou, whose head did stars and sunbeams know,  
Self-schooled, self-scanned, self-honoured, self-secure,  
Did'st walk on earth unguessed at. Better so!

Born on April 22nd or 23rd, 1564, in a small house in Henley Street, Stratford-on-Avon, Shakespeare spent his early years in the lovely Midland country, among the sweet English meadows bordered by lofty elms, which form one of the beauties of Warwickshire. He knew well the slow-winding stream—often lit up by a cheerful sun—of the Stratford Avon. On this beautiful country he looked back during the whole of his busy life in London, always longing to return, always hoping to live and die there. His earlier works, notably *Venus and Adonis*, give ample evidence of his love for, and thorough knowledge of, this Midland county, of the Vale of Arden, the woods of Charlecote, of their wild-flowers, their game, their country sports and country customs, and of the old legends and superstitions that were

prevalent in the country-side. His description of the hunted hare (*Venus and Adonis*) is well known :—

Then shalt thou see the dew-bedabbled wretch  
Turn, and return, indenting with the way;  
Each envious brier his weary legs doth scratch,  
Each shadow makes him stop, each murmur stay.

2. **His Education.**—He was sent early to the Free Grammar School of Stratford, where they still show his desk and the window at which he sat. He possibly sat for his own portrait in *As You Like It*—the portrait of

The whining schoolboy with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school.

He probably did not learn very much at the Grammar School—chiefly because his education was interrupted, and he had to leave school at the too early age of thirteen. In the sixteenth century there was little taught in our schools but Latin, and Ben Jonson tells us that Shakespeare had “small Latin and less Greek.” The probability is that he had no Greek at all; but there is good evidence to show that he was a fair Latin scholar, and could read Ovid and Virgil with ease and pleasure to himself. His leisure hours seem to have been given to out-door sport—to hunting, to hawking, and to angling. In these pursuits he took delight, and his knowledge of Nature and her ways is visible on every page of his work. These experiences supplied him with many sources of illustration and analogy, from which he draws freely in his plays. In his youth, too, he gained some knowledge of actors and the stage. His father had risen to be bailiff of Stratford (he subsequently became chief alderman); and in his year of office the corporation of the town admitted for the first time two companies of London actors to the temporary freedom of the borough. We can well understand the interest these visits would create in a country town; and young Shakespeare, we may presume, was to his delight taken by his father to see the plays. Between the years 1573 and 1581—that is, from Shakespeare's ninth to his seventeenth year—nine companies of strolling players visited the town, and no doubt gave a series of representations to



the inhabitants. At Coventry, too, the old miracle plays could still be seen acted. He must also have been familiar with the great festivities held at Kenilworth, which is only fifteen miles away, when the Queen visited the Earl of Leicester in 1575. With this and other such-like opportunities, young Shakespeare early acquired an intense love of the drama.

His father, John Shakespeare, met with some misfortunes in business ; he had to diminish his expenses ; and in 1577 the son left school and had to look about for some means of earning a living for himself.

3. **His Marriage.**—At the very early age of eighteen, while a mere youth, and with no career before him, he drifted into marriage. His wife was Anne Hathaway—a name still existing in Stratford and its neighbourhood—the daughter of a respectable yeoman in Shottery, a pretty village within easy reach of Stratford. She was eight years older than Shakespeare ; and the great dramatist, in *Twelfth Night*,<sup>1</sup> warns the young against this disparity of age on the wrong side. He was married in 1582 ; a daughter, Susannah, was born in 1583 ; twins, Hamnet and Judith, came in 1585 ; and thus Shakespeare found himself the father of a considerable family before he was well twenty-two. This decided him to seek better opportunities of making a living than Stratford could give ; and he left it to seek his fortune in the capital. There is a tradition, too, upon which reliance can be placed, that his departure from his native town was hastened by a breach of the game laws, then so strict. He was prosecuted for deer-poaching by Sir Thomas Lucy, owner of Charlecote, who showed undue severity towards him. Long afterwards he took revenge on the knight by immortalising him in the farcical character of Mr. Justice Shallow in *Henry IV.*, *Henry V.*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

The farmhouse in which Anne Hathaway lived is still in existence. It was bought by the nation in 1892, and is known as "Anne Hathaway's Cottage."

4. **London in Shakespeare's Time.**—Shakespeare reached London at a time that was teeming with great men, great events, great

<sup>1</sup> Let still the woman take  
An elder than herself ; so wears she to him,  
So sways she level in her husband's heart.

hopes, and splendid aspirations. The foundations of the British Empire and of the command of the seas were being laid. About that time great dramatists like Marlowe, Greene, Nash, Peele, and others lived and rioted in the capital; the exploits of Drake excited the interest of the Londoners, and formed the subject of talk in every tavern and wine-booth; the long rivalry between Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots was nearing its close; and the preparations for the Invincible Armada had already begun. Thus the end of the sixteenth century was a time of excitement, adventure, eager enthusiasm, ardent patriotism, such as England had never seen before. London was not then the unwieldy province covered with houses that it now is; it was less than one-tenth its present size; and the population numbered less than half a million. Every one who was himself at all notable knew, or knew of, the ablest and most celebrated men in the city; and Shakespeare soon mingled on equal and amicable terms in the intellectual society of London. It was a time when life in England was full of eagerness, high spirits, enthusiasm, vitality, strong hopes, and every kind of internal and external picturesqueness. Shakespeare seems to have lived about five and twenty years in London; but he was always glad to journey down to Stratford and pay short visits there.

5. **Earlier Poems.**—Shakespeare's first poems—neither of them dramatic in form—were *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*. The first was written between the years 1585 and 1587, but it was not published till 1593. The date of writing the second is not known, but it was certainly published in 1594, when Shakespeare was thirty years of age. *Venus and Adonis* tells the story of Venus's love for a handsome youth, who was killed while hunting the boar. The poem is written in the most elaborate style; as many phrases as Shakespeare's wealth of fancy and expression could invent are heaped round each statement; the stanzas bristle with metaphors, conceits, and allusions, and it is plain that the whole story is a carefully worked-out poetical exercise. The same may be said of *Lucrece*. Both poems, however, strongly manifest Shakespeare's love of nature and natural objects, and his power of accurate observation. "The gentle lark, weary of rest, from his moist cabinet mounts up on high"; "as the snail, whose tender horns being hit,

shrinks backwards in his shelly cave with pain"; when Adonis smiles, "in each cheek appears a pretty dimple: Love made those hollows, if himself were slain, he might be buried in a tomb so simple"—these and a hundred other observations and conceits are to be found in both poems.

(i) *Venus and Adonis* is written in a six-lined stanza of iambic pentameters. The quatrain is alternately rimed; and there is a rimed couplet at the close. It is dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, and Shakespeare calls it "the first heir of my invention."

(ii) *Lucrece* is written in seven-lined stanzas. The riming is according to this scheme: *a b a b b c c*.

Let him have time to see his friends his foes,  
And merry fools to mock at him resort;  
Let him have time to mark how slow time goes  
In time of sorrow, and how swift and short  
His time of folly and his time of sport;  
And ever let his unrecalling crime  
Have time to wail the abasing of his time.

#### 6. Shakespeare's Apprenticeship to the Drama (1588—1596).—

Shakespeare's first work in connection with the theatre seems to have been the touching, re-touching, patching-up, and re-writing parts of old plays, which had for some time been in the repertoire of the players. By the year 1592 he had touched up the play of *Titus Andronicus* and *The First Part of Henry VI*. By 1595 he had recast the second and third parts of the same play. He had also written some of his most popular plays, such as *The Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the historic play of *Richard III*. These belong to what has been called his FIRST PERIOD. This was the period of youthful ardour and exuberant passion and expression. To the same period belong the plays of *Romco and Juliet*, *Richard II*, and *King John*—plays which show an enormous power of rhetoric, with a delight in the countless varying of the expression of one idea, and in bringing all kinds of figures to add force and picturesqueness to his work.

7. Second Period (1596—1602).—This period is opened by his production of *The Merchant of Venice*; and in this play he shows that he had become a master in the dramatic art. He wrote also (about 1597) the two parts of *Henry IV*.; and he continued the character and the doings of Sir John Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. *Henry V*. was written in 1599; and in the same year the

Globe Theatre was built. Shakespeare was one of the proprietors, and he thus now possessed three sources of income: his writing, his occasional acting, and his share of the profits from the Globe. The delightful comedies of *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It* were also produced between 1598 and 1601, and he is said to have taken the part of Adam in the last of these plays. The *Sonnets*, completed between 1595 and 1605, but first published in 1609, and numbering 154, have been the subject of much criticism; various theories have been advocated to account for their origin, and for the strong personal element that pervades them throughout. The dedication runs:—

"To the only begetter of these ensuing sonnets, Mr. W. H., all happiness and that eternity promised by our everliving poet wisheth the well-wishing adventurer in setting forth.—T. T."

T. T. is Thomas Thorpe, who published them, and Mr. W. H. is considered by some to be William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, Sidney's nephew, an accomplished nobleman and patron of letters. But we know that the Earl of Southampton (Henry Wriothesley) was the real patron of Shakespeare, and criticism is not yet silent on the subject. Sonnets 1 to 126 are addressed in terms of sincerest friendship to a noble youth, and the remainder to a woman, and the story they tell is one of love and trust betrayed, and the consequent sorrows of a wounded heart. Of the *Sonnets* Wordsworth says: "There is no part of the writings of the poet where is found, in an equal compass, a greater number of exquisite feelings felicitously expressed."

(i) Shakespeare's income, in 1599 and onwards, was probably as much as £500 a year; and £500 a year in the sixteenth century represented many times the purchasing power of that sum at the present time. In 1596 he had gone down to Stratford and purchased New Place, the largest house in the town. It still exists in excellent condition.

(ii) The *Sonnets* are not written in the true sonnet form—that is, the Italian form. They consist merely of three quatrains (iambic pentameter alternately rhimed), followed by a rhimed couplet.

(iii) "*The Merry Wives of Windsor* is essentially prosaic, and is indeed the only play of Shakespeare written almost wholly in prose." It is said to have been written by order of Queen Elizabeth, who wanted to see how Falstaff, "the most delightful of egoists," would succeed in love. It "is a play written expressly for the barbarian aristocrats with their hatred of ideas, their insensibility to beauty, their hard efficient manners."—DOWDEN.

(iv) "*As You Like It* is the sweetest and happiest of all Shakespeare's comedies. No one suffers; no one lives an eager intense life; there is no tragic interest in it."—*Ibid.*



8. **The Third Period (1602—1608).**—Shakespeare's third period opens with the immortal play of *Hamlet*. Then followed, but at intervals, the three great Roman plays of *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*. Between the years 1604 and 1606 were produced the greatest of his tragedies—*Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *Lear*; and in these we see the culmination of his genius. These plays not only show a larger knowledge of the dramatic art, but they give ample evidence of a deeper and wider experience of human life. They bring before us the inevitable issues of sin and of crime in misery and punishment; the avenging conscience which every man carries in his bosom; the weakness which entails its own consequences with as great certainty as evil-doing; the triumph of wickedness and the degradation of manhood and virtue into misery, wretchedness, and contempt.

(i) *Hamlet* is the story of a man given to meditation, to metaphysical speculation, whose will has been weakened, and even atrophied, by inaction. "He is an observer and critic both of himself and of others. He can understand and mock; whereas he ought to set himself sternly to his piece of work." This thinker, who is so fond of burying himself in his own thoughts, suddenly finds himself in a situation where he is called on to act against those who are nearest and some who are dearest to him; and he considers and procrastinates. At last the whole edifice of crime and deceit breaks in pieces and falls on his head, burying along with himself innocent and guilty alike.

(ii) *Hamlet* is probably the most varied and the most full of movement of all Shakespeare's plays. There are in it all sorts and conditions of men; there is the supernatural; there is the pathetic fate of Ophelia; there is poisoning; there is war; there is play-acting; there is comedy; there is the saddest and the deepest tragedy.

(iii) *Julius Caesar* might better have been called "The Fall of Caesar." Brutus and Cassius are the chief characters, and Antony is the chief orator.

(iv) *Antony and Cleopatra* is "a divinisation of pleasure, followed by the remorseless Nemesis of eternal law." Cleopatra is endlessly attractive—

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale  
Her infinite variety.

(v) *Coriolanus* gives the story of "the ruin of a noble life through the sin of pride." His pride is "two-fold, a passionate self-esteem which is essentially egoistic; and secondly a passionate prejudice of class."—DOWDEN.

(vi) "The tragedy of *Othello* is the tragedy of a free and lordly creature taken in the toils and writhing to death." He loves Desdemona without limit; he trusts Iago (who is a thorough villain, incapable of all nobility) in the same degree. Iago administers the poison of suspicion, which ferments in his mind, and produces distrust, hatred, and finally murder and suicide.

(vii) *Macbeth* is the story of a too ambitious man who allows himself to



be too easily persuaded by a more ambitious wife. The Witches are the external and ghastly symbols of the inward temptation. Hamlet is the very opposite of Macbeth. The one thinks too much and acts too seldom; the other acts too rapidly—rushes into action and then reflects, when reflection can mean nothing but remorse. Hamlet is a student and a thinker; Macbeth a soldier and a general.

(viii) *Lear* (perhaps the greatest tragedy in all literature) shows us the contrast between stormy passion in Lear himself; criminal selfishness in his two daughters; sweet and loyal fidelity in Cordelia, Kent, and the Fool.

Here Love the slain with Love the slayer lies;  
 Deep drown'd are both in the same sunless pool.  
 Up from its depths that mirror thundering skies  
 Bubbles the wan mirth of the mirthless Fool.

W. WATSON.

9. **The Fourth Period (1608—1613).**—The chief plays in this last period are *Cymbeline*, *The Tempest*, and *The Winter's Tale*. In the last productive year of his life he wrote, along with Fletcher, the play of *Henry VIII*. For three years he preserved complete silence, and died in the year 1616, on April 23rd—his birthday and St. George's Day—at the age of fifty-two.

(i) *The Winter's Tale* is an example of fierce jealousy which becomes more and more unjust as the play goes on. The jealousy of Leontes is not like the jealousy of Othello, it is the jealousy of a small and even spiteful soul.

(ii) *The Tempest* is the last great play written by Shakespeare. Prospero, the Duke of Milan, represents Shakespeare himself in his retirement. Prospero, like Shakespeare, is a great enchanter; but when justice has been done and forgiveness extended to the wrong-doers, he breaks his magic wand, buries, where they cannot be recovered, his books of the dark art, dismisses his spirits of the air, and returns to his dukedom to do the work of the common day. In the same way, Shakespeare, in the year 1611, seems to have laid aside his pen, as he had previously doffed the buskin of the actor. *The Tempest* is a play of forgiveness and final reconciliation. The moral of *The Tempest* is that "the true freedom of man consists in service." Even Ariel and Caliban—the one "of the air airy," the other "of the earth earthy"—are made to feel that. They find their truest and deepest freedom in "bonds of affection, bonds of duty."

10. **His Character.**—Shakespeare seems to have been universally liked, and even beloved. He was an eminently companionable and attractive man. His friends were unanimous in praising his character and disposition; and his fellow-citizens of Stratford had for him unclouded respect and esteem. He was a well-built, handsome man; a large head with fine hazel eyes, hair and beard auburn, features of remarkable serenity, and an expression at once of power

and of refinement, characterise most of the traditional portraits. He was fond of conversation, frequented the Mitre and other taverns, and had long talks with his fellow-writers and actors. His "wit-combats" with Ben Jonson were long renowned, even after he had retired to New Place. Fuller compares Ben Jonson to a great heavy Spanish galleon, slow of movement, difficult to turn, heavy laden with learning; while Shakespeare was like an English ship, a rapid sailer, nimble in manoeuvre, and quick to take advantage of every breeze.

11. **His Genius.**—The qualities of Shakespeare's genius are so striking that they appeal to persons of the most opposite character; his plays are popular in every country, and there is no side of human life which he has not depicted. Milton speaks of "his native wood-notes wild," but this is misleading. Shakespeare's humour, wit, and imagination were only equalled by his skill and the sanity of his judgment. It was he who first gave to "the rudeness of early drama" refinement, art, order, symmetry, and elevation. He is not only the greatest dramatist, he is also the greatest poet that ever lived—that is, he surpasses all other poets in the immense wealth of his imagination, in the compass of his creative powers, and also in his richness of expression. He knew his fellow-man; and he has left us in his plays a gallery of characters such as no other dramatist has given us. In comedy, there are the well-defined and infinitely humorous characters of Malvolio, Dogberry and Verges, Nick Bottom, Launcelot, Touchstone and many more. In tragedy, there is the perplexed Othello, the doubting Hamlet, the rash Macbeth and his wife, the discrowned and despairing Lear, the revengeful Shylock. He has portrayed for us the men and manners of all countries and of all ages—Athenians, Romans, Egyptians, Danes, Britons, Italians, Englishmen. There are two things which mark all his plays—the intensity of life and the boundless freedom of his handling. Nothing is too high for him, nothing too low; nothing too noble or too common. He pays no attention to the rules of his art; he does not rebel against these rules; he ignores them. He cares nothing for the unities of space and time: years are made to pass upon his stage; and even decades. Only in one of his

plays—*The Tempest*—does he observe the unity of time ; three hours pass, and three hours is the length of the representation of the play. He puts Bohemia on the sea-coast, and wrecks a ship on its rocks. But, over against all this, he introduces us to the richest, most exuberant, most intense life : he touches a puppet, the puppet becomes a man, receives a human heart, and glows with the most fiery passions. Life, movement, struggle, variety—all these are found in every one of his plays, dominating them from the first line to the very last.

(i) "When he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation : he was naturally learned : he needed not the spectacle of books to read nature ; he looked inwards and found her there."—DRYDEN.

(ii) "It was the union of the most consummate judgment with the highest creative power that made Shakespeare the miracle he was."—CRAIK. X.

12. **His Style.**—Professor Craik's deliverance on this head is entirely sufficient : "Shakespeare has invented twenty styles. He has a style for every one of his great characters, by which that character is distinguished from every other as much as Pope is distinguished by his style from Dryden, or Milton from Spenser. And yet all the while it is he himself with his own peculiar accent that we hear in every one of them." On the other hand, a great critic—Matthew Arnold—tells us that "we must never forget that Shakespeare is the great poet he is from his skill in discerning and firmly conceiving an excellent action, from his power of intensely feeling a situation, of intimately associating himself with a character ; not from his gift of expression, which rather even leads him astray, degenerating sometimes into a fondness for curiosity of expression, into an irritability of fancy, which seems to make it impossible for him to say a plain thing plainly, even when the press of the action demands the very directest language, or its level character the very simplest. . . . This over-curiousness of expression is indeed but the excessive employment of a wonderful gift—of the power of saying a thing in a happier way than any other man ; nevertheless, it is carried so far that one understands what M. Guizot meant when he said that Shakespeare appears in his language to have tried all styles except that of simplicity."

13. **His Grammar.**—The English language had, by Shakespeare's

time, freed itself from most of its inflections, and was beginning to exult in its freedom. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that any word might be employed in any function, or as any "part of speech." You can "happy" a person, "malice" another; talk of "a fair" instead of a beauty, of "a pale" instead of paleness; "askance" your eyes instead of turning them aside; use the nominative for the objective (*he* for *him*), and the objective for the nominative (*him* for *he*), and an adjective at any time for an adverb. Shakespeare now and then employs dialect. Thus he makes use of the Early English Northern third person plural in *s*:—

The great man down, you mark his favourites *flies*;  
The poor, advanced, makes friends of enemies.

He uses double negatives, as was the custom of the time, not to cancel each other's meanings, but to intensify each other. He uses also double comparatives, like "more better"; and double superlatives, like "the most unkindest cut of all."

14. **His Versification** (i).—The measure employed by Shakespeare in his plays is the five-foot iambic measure unrimed, which is usually called blank verse. In his earlier plays the young writer had not yet acquired much power over his instrument, and he generally made the sense end with each line. A line of this kind is called "end-stopt." But, as with ease and practice he gained power, he allowed the sense to "run on," as in these lines from *Henry VIII.* (Act III. 2):—

This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth  
The tender leaves of hope. . . .  
I feel my heart new open'd. O, how wretched  
Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours.

The proportion of unstopt lines to end-stopt lines in the earlier plays is only about ten per cent.; in the later plays it is from thirty to fifty per cent. It is evident that the running-on gives greater variety, vivacity, and naturalness to the dialogue. Again, in the earlier plays, he is fond of using rime; and the results of an examination of this practice of his have been adopted by critics to settle the question whether a play, of otherwise doubtful date, belongs to the earlier or to the later part of his career. In *Love's Labour's Lost* there are two rimed lines to every one that is



unrime. In *The Winter's Tale* there is not a single rime. At the same time it would be unsafe to employ this test of rime as in itself sufficient to fix the position in time of this or that play. In *Othello*—a late play—he employs it in the dialogue between the Duke and Brabantio, the father of Desdemona; and from this it is clear that Shakespeare made use of it even in his later compositions to produce a special effect.

15. (ii).—Another peculiarity in the structure of Shakespeare's verse is his use of what are called "light endings," "weak endings," and "feminine endings." Light endings consist of such words as *am, be, can, do, has, I, thou, they*, and similar monosyllables. The weak endings consist of words like *and, for, from, if, in, of, or*, etc. It is plain that connective words like these hurry on the speaker into the succeeding line, and make the verse more like ordinary speech. *The Comedy of Errors* does not contain a single weak or light ending; *Macbeth* has them in large number; and *The Winter's Tale* and *Henry VIII.* also have them in very large proportion. The feminine or "double ending" was also a characteristic of Shakespeare's later work. Thus we find in *Henry VIII.* (Act IV. 2) Queen Katharine uttering such lines as these:—

In which I have commended to his good|ness  
The model of our chaste loves, his young daught|er:  
The dews of heaven fall thick in blessings on | her!—  
Beseeching him to give her virtuous breed|ing;  
(She is young, and of a noble modest na|ture;  
I hope, she will deserve well;) and a little  
To love her for her mother's sake, that lov'd | him.

The genius of Shakespeare permits him to employ the most trivial inventions to "split the ears of the groundlings"—of apprentices and bargemen; to exaggerate in the most absurd fashion (some of his Romans weep so much that their tears cause the Tiber to overflow); and his puns, the common fault of his age, are often of the poorest and feeblest kind. But all these faults are trifling, and count but little when compared with the magnitude and grandeur of his work.

16. **Summary.**—Of no other writer has so much been written, and a whole literature has arisen round his works. This is due to the splendour and universality of his genius. He is esteemed as much



abroad as at home, for his genius and his work belong to man. When we think of the environment of the stage of his day, of the character of so many of his fellow-dramatists, of the temptation to give way to the passion of the moment, and the varied enticements of the hour, we cannot but admire his purity of aim, the morality of his genius, and his noble appreciation of the purity, truth, and heroism of womanhood—transcending in these all the play-writers of his time, and never excelled, even if equalled, in the annals of any stage. He ranged over the whole domain of human feeling and human emotion; he penetrated into the inmost recesses of the human mind; and under all the varieties and all the play of human passion, he gave utterance to the truest and profoundest thought. Never were human motives for good or bad analysed with such unerring instinct, or the searchlight of a penetrating intellect brought to play in disclosing the forms that haunt the imagination, or shadow and terrorise over the human soul. “To Shakespeare,” as his latest biographer has said, “the intellect of the work, speaking in divers accents, applies with one accord his own words: ‘How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in apprehension how like a god!’”

### THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMATISTS.

1. Ben Jonson (1573—1637). **His Life.**—Ben Jonson,<sup>1</sup> the friend and admirer of Shakespeare, was about nine years younger than the greater writer. He belonged to an old Border family; his father, ruined by religious persecution in the reign of Queen Mary, had become a preacher, and died a month before the birth of the poet. His mother married again, her second husband being a master-builder; and the boy was sent to the parish school of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. William Camden, the great antiquary and writer on British antiquities, who was then a master in Westminster School, was struck by the bright intelligence of the lad, and took upon himself the charge of his education. He placed

<sup>1</sup> The elder branches of the family spelt their name JOHNSTON, as is the custom still in Scotland. Ben Jonson dropped the *k* and the *t*.

the boy in Westminster, and looked after him till he was sixteen. In a short poem Ben Jonson speaks of him, as—

Camden, most reverend head, to whom I owe  
All that I am in arts, and all I know.

After leaving school he worked for a short time in his step-father's business; but he soon grew weary of the monotony of it, and went off to the Low Countries to fight as a volunteer against the Spanish troops. On one occasion, he found himself opposed to a Spaniard in single combat; the duel went on in sight of the two armies; and Jonson despatched his opponent. He was at that time only nineteen. On his return home he went for a short time to Cambridge; he next joined a company of players, and became an actor, and, more especially, a playwright.

Jonson joined freely in the wild and boisterous life of the actors and gallants of the period; he fought a duel in 1598 with a Gabriel Spencer, an actor, and killed him; for this he was arrested, tried for murder, and found guilty, but was released after a term of imprisonment. He was burnt in the hand, and obliged to give up all his goods and chattels, which were probably of no great value. Later on in life he frequented the Mermaid, a tavern near Cheapside, between Bread Street and Friday Street. Here Shakespeare, Beaumont, Fletcher, and other writers connected with the theatre met for talk and "wit-combats." Beaumont writes:—

What things have we seen  
Done at the Mermaid! Heard words that have been  
So nimble and so full of subtle flame,  
As if that every one from whom they came  
Had meant to put his whole life in a jest,  
And had resolved to live a fool the rest  
Of his dull life.

By the second decade of the seventeenth century he had become a sort of "Dictator" in literature (as Dr. Johnson was in the eighteenth century), and was surrounded by a group of young followers and admirers, whom he called his "sons," and who were said "to be sealed of the tribe of Ben."

In 1616 Ben Jonson published, as a folio, the first volume of his works, which contained plays, epigrams, and miscellaneous poems; the last afterwards appeared separately as *The Forest*.

In the year 1619 the University of Oxford conferred on him the degree of M.A.; he was made Poet Laureate and received 100 marks a year; and in the same year he travelled all the way to Scotland on foot, and stayed for a fortnight at Hawthornden (near Edinburgh) with the eminent Scottish poet, Drummond. They did not get on well together. Drummond was a little offended by the too aggressive and self-important manner of the Englishman; he mentions in his diary that he was "a great lover and praiser of himself, and a condemner and scorner of others." After the death of James I. in 1625, Jonson was obliged by poverty to take once more to play-writing. In 1631 he quarrelled with his friend and colleague, Inigo Jones, the great architect, who used to work with him in the bringing out of his masques; and this for a time lost him the patronage of the court. Not long after he regained the King's favour and received a yearly pension of a hundred pounds with a butt of canary. And now he was at the head of another circle of young poets, called the Apollo Club. In his youth, he was tall, gaunt, and large-boned, with a "rocky face" (it was pock-marked) and bright eager eyes; in his old age, he was a "vast tun of man," of enormous bulk, and weighing about twenty stone. He died in August of the year 1637, and was buried in the north aisle of Westminster Abbey. A subscription was set on foot for the purpose of raising a suitable monument to his memory. A considerable sum was received, but the outbreak of the Great Rebellion hindered the carrying out of this design, and the money was returned to the subscribers. Meantime the stone which had been lifted for the interment of his remains had been temporarily replaced above them, and on this the inscription, "O rare Ben Jonson," the one memorial of him existing in Westminster, was cut by a workman, by desire of Sir John Young, familiarly known as "Jack Young," at the cost of eighteen-pence. *Sic transit!* Till he died, he was looked upon as the head of English literature—a position similar to that afterwards occupied by Dryden.

2. **His Works.**—Ben Jonson's works consist of plays, masques, lyrics, and a little prose. His most fertile decade was the ten

years between 1605 and 1615. His plays consist of both comedies and tragedies; and he wrote only two of the latter: *Sejanus his Fall* (produced in 1603, the year of the accession of James I.) and *Catiline his Conspiracy*. His chief comedies are: *Volpone, or the Fox*; *Epicoene, or the Silent Woman*; and *The Alchemist*. These, his three greatest dramatic pieces, had been preceded by *Every Man in his Humour* (about 1596), in the acting of which his friend Shakespeare took a leading part, and by *Every Man out of his Humour* (1599). Jonson was a man of great learning, though no pedant; and his classical plays are based on the facts supplied by the best Roman writers, and supported (in notes) by quotations from them. His last play, which he either left unfinished or of which a portion was lost, is the most truly poetical of all his dramas; it is called *The Sad Shepherd, or A Tale of Robin Hood*. The play is prefaced by an Argument and a Prologue; the latter commencing with the pathetic couplet:—

He that hath feasted you these forty years,  
And fitted fables for your finer ears.

The first scene, which is laid in Sherwood Forest, opens with these beautiful lines, worthy of Shakespeare himself, spoken by the Sad Shepherd:—

Here she was wont to go! And here! And here!  
Just where those daisies, pinks, and violets grow:  
The world may find the Spring by following her,  
For other print her airy steps ne'er left.  
Her treading would not bend a blade of grass,  
Or shake the downy blow-ball from his stalk!  
But like the soft west wind she shot along,  
And where she went, the flowers took thickest root,  
As she had sow'd them with her odorous foot.

The jealousy among the poets and dramatists which gave rise to so much satirical writing at this time is shown in several of Jonson's works—in *Cynthia's Revels*, and *The Poetaster*, in which he attacks Decker and Marston. In *Eastward Ho* an attack on the Scotch led to his imprisonment, with Marston and Chapman, joint authors with him in the play. In 1614 appeared *Bartholomew Fair*, which satirises the Puritans, and gives a strikingly realistic



picture of the customs of the age, as shown at this ancient and popular resort.

(i) *Volpone* (1605) is the story of a rich, wicked, and misanthropic magnifico of Venice, who preys upon the purses of his acquaintances by various devices. He pretends to be very ill; his "friends" send him rich presents in the hope of large legacies when he dies. Every character in the play is either fool or scoundrel; but Volpone defeats his own ends. The names of the chief characters are Voltore (Vulture), Corbaccio (Raven), and Corvino (Crow). It is the most spirited of his plays.

(ii) *The Alchemist* is a satire upon those chemists who believed, or said they believed, that they could change the baser metals into gold, by means of the "Philosopher's Stone." The chief character, Sir Epicure Mammon, is considered the strongest Jonson has put upon the stage.

(iii) Ben Jonson cannot be congratulated on his skill in naming his characters. Many of his names were mere labels or tickets—such as Fastidious Brisk, Tribulation Wholesome, Sir Diaphanous Silkworm, Abel Druggier, Sir Amorous La-Foole, and many others equally fantastic.

(iv) Shakespeare painted "the whole of the human nature"; Jonson particular phases of human beings, "humours" or peculiarities.

3. **His Masques.**—The first half of the seventeenth century was the palmy day of the masque in England; and Ben Jonson was the greatest and most fertile composer of this sort of entertainment. His masques, both in bulk and in excellence, far surpass the work of any other writer. His friend Inigo Jones (1572—1652) helped him with the scenery and the mechanism of the masques, of which special dancing masters superintended the ballets, and the best Italian composers supplied the music. The libretti were written by Jonson; and they are full of wit, learning, and true poetry. The titles of some of them are: *The Golden Age Restored*; *The Vision of Delight*; *The Masque of Owls*; *For the Honour of Wales*; *The Masque of Queens*. In this last, James I.'s wife, Anne of Denmark, took a part in 1609.

(i) A *Masque* is a short play in verse, accompanied with music and dancing, and generally adorned by rich dresses and elaborate scenery. They were very popular in the English court, from the time of Ben Jonson to the Commonwealth in 1639. Milton's *Comus* is a masque.

(ii) Inigo Jones was a famous architect, often called "the English Palladio." He studied in Italy, chiefly in Venice. He built the Banqueting Hall in Whitehall, the gate of St. Mary's in Oxford, and other well-known edifices.

4. **His Lyrical Poems.**—Ben Jonson, as a lyrist, is hardly surpassed in the whole range of English literature. His best lyrical poems

are: "Drink to me only with thine eyes"; "Still to be neat, still to be drest"; "Queen and Huntress, chaste and fair"; "O do not wanton with those eyes!" "Slow, slow, fresh fount, keep time with my salt tears!" His lyrics are scattered through his plays and masques; and they are also to be found in the collections of his poems called *Underwoods* and *The Forest*. The following short specimens of Jonson's lyrical verses will show the union of strength with delicacy, the exquisiteness of the rhythm, and the variety of which he was master:-

Slow, slow, fresh fount, keep time with my salt tears:

Yet slower, yet; O faintly, gentle springs:

List to the heavy part the music bears,

Woe weeps out her division, when she sings.

Droop herbs and flowers,

Fall grief in showers,

Our beauties are not ours;

O, I could still,

Like melting snow upon some craggy hill,

Drop, drop, drop, drop,

Since nature's pride is now a withered daffodil.

(From *Cynthia's Revels*.)

Have you seen but a bright lily grow

Before rude hands have touched it?

Have you marked but the fall o' the snow

Before the soil hath smutched it?

Have you felt the wool of the beaver?

Or swan's down ever?

Or have smelt o' the bud o' the briar?

Or the nard in the fire?

Or have tasted the bag of the bee?

O so white,—O so soft,—O so sweet is she!

(From *Underwoods*.)

It is not growing like a tree

In bulk, doth make Man better be;

Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,

To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere:

A lily of a day

Is fairer far in May:

Although it fall and die that night,

It was the plant and flower of Light.

In small proportions we just beauties see;

And in short measures life may perfect be.

(From *A Pindaric Ode*.)

In these and similar lyrics he showed his sweetness and felicity

of diction, as in his plays he exhibited his satirical and descriptive powers and wealth of ideas.

It is worthy of note that Ben Jonson anticipated Tennyson in the metre of *In Memoriam*. His poem called *A Noble Suit* is written in this metre :—

Though beauty be the mark of praise,  
And yours of whom I sing be such  
As not the world can praise too much,  
Yet 'tis your Virtue now I raise.

5. **His Prose Works.**—Jonson's prose works consist of only two books—his *English Grammar* and a set of short essays which he called *Timber; or, Discoveries made upon Men and Matter*. The *Discoveries* were written during several years after 1630, and were not published till 1641. The style of the book is clear and compact; and in some respects it reminds us of Bacon. The following is an extract :—

Change is a kind of refreshing in studies, and infuseth knowledge by way of recreation. Thence the school itself is called a play<sup>1</sup> or game, and all letters (literature) are so best taught to scholars. They should not be affrighted or deterred in their entry, but drawn on with exercise or emulation. A youth should not be made to hate study before he know the causes to love it; or taste the bitterness before the sweet; but called on and allured, intreated and praised: yea, when he deserves it not. . . . It is a good thing to inflame the mind, and though ambition itself be a vice, it is often the cause of great virtue.

In his *English Grammar*, Jonson bewails the loss of the *en* as the ending of the plural of verbs, and considers it "a great blemish to our tongue." He points out what a large number of trochees, and how much greater ease and lightness English verse enjoyed, when it possessed this ending.

6. **Testimonia.**—It was the custom in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for one poet to write what was called a "testimonium" of another; and numbers of them were usually prefixed to an edition of the poet's works. Many poets, like Fletcher, Beaumont, Ford, Herrick, Shirley, Randolph, wrote verses in praise of Ben Jonson. Fletcher says :—

Thy labours shall outlive thee; and, like gold  
Stamp't for continuance, shall be current where  
There is a sun, a people, or a year.

<sup>1</sup> By the Romans a school was called "Ludus Literarius," and the schoolmaster was a "Ludi magister."

Another writes of him as—

Thou great refiner of our poesy,  
Who turn'st to gold that which before was lead.

One speaks of him as—

That spring  
To whose most rich and fruitful head we owe  
The purest streams of language that can flow.

And in commemorating the "nights and feasts of the gods" they had together at the Mermaid and other places, Herrick says:—

Ah, Ben !  
Say how or when  
Shall we thy guests  
Meet at those lyric feasts  
Made at the Sun,  
The Dog, the Triple Tun ?  
Where we such clusters had  
As made us nobly wild, not mad ;  
And yet each verse of thine  
Outdid the meat, outdid the frolic wine.

Waller speaks of him as the "Mirror of poets ! mirror of our age !" Milton writes of his "learned sock" ; and Cleveland calls him "the Muses' fairest light in no dark time, the wonder of a learned age."

"Jonson's plays are admirable for their elaborate art ; . . . they abound both in wit and eloquence, which in some passages rises to the glow of poetry ; the figures of the scene stand out in high relief, every one of them, from the most important to the most insignificant, being finished off at all points with the minutest care ; the dialogue carries on the action ; . . . the plot is in general controlled and evolved with the same learned skill. . . . But the execution, even where it is most brilliant, is hard and angular ; nothing seems to flow naturally and freely ; the whole has an air of constraint, and effort, and exaggeration ; and the effect that is produced by the most arresting passages is the most undramatic that can be—a greater sympathy with the performance as a work of art than as anything else."—CRAIK.

7. **Beaumont and Fletcher.**—It has already been remarked that among the Elizabethan dramatists it was by no means an uncommon thing for one writer to modify and recast the plays of another ; but we have also many instances of literary partnerships, of which none is so striking as that of Beaumont and Fletcher. These writers, a kind of poetic *Dioscuri* or Twin-brethren, published in their joint names a number of plays, to allot the respective shares



in which has taxed the utmost ingenuity of successive critics. Their work can, in this respect, only be paralleled in modern times by that of such writers as Besant and Rice in England, or by the novels of Erckmann-Chatrian in France. This dramatic confederacy lasted for nine or ten years without being dissolved by any difference or quarrel. During this short period some thirty-seven or thirty-eight beautiful and effective plays were the result of their labours; and after the early death of Beaumont the surviving partner produced some twelve or thirteen completed works—part by himself and part again in collaboration with various other dramatists.

8. **Francis Beaumont** (1584—1616), the third son of a Justice of the Common Pleas, was born at Grace Dieu, in Leicestershire, about 1584. He was entered at Broadgates Hall, now Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1597, and admitted of the Inner Temple in 1600. He early made the acquaintance of Ben Jonson, to whose comedy *Volpone* he contributed commendatory verses, and he does not seem ever to have seriously prosecuted his legal studies. He joined John Fletcher in writing plays about 1607, and the close intimacy of friendship and collaboration was kept up till the year of Beaumont's death. The poets lived for some time together not far from the Globe Theatre on Bankside; but the community of goods was dissolved by the marriage of Beaumont in 1613. In that year he produced a Masque for the Societies of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn to celebrate the marriage of Elizabeth, daughter of James I., to the Elector Palatine. Beaumont died in 1616, the same year that saw the death of Shakespeare, and was buried at the entrance of St. Benedict's Chapel in Westminster Abbey, with no inscription to mark his place of sepulture.

9. **John Fletcher** (1579—1625) was born at Rye, in Sussex, where his father—afterwards successively Bishop of Bristol, Worcester, and London—was then vicar. The family would seem to have had special poetic gifts, as the younger brother of the bishop, father of the poets Giles and Phineas Fletcher, is himself spoken of by Wood as "an excellent poet." John entered Benet College, Cambridge, in 1591, and quitted it in 1596, at the age of seventeen, his father's death having left him in necessitous circumstances. He produced, in 1609, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, probably written

some time previously, and continued, as we have seen, for the next seven or eight years to work in collaboration with Beaumont; after whose death he still worked industriously as a dramatist. He died of the Plague in 1625, nine years after Beaumont, and was buried in St. Saviour's Church, Southwark, like his brother-dramatist without any commemorative memorial.

10. **Their Works.**—Beaumont and Fletcher rank amongst the most prolific writers of their time. To them are attributed more than fifty plays, though doubtless Fletcher was assisted, after the death of Beaumont, by the collaboration of Rowley, Shirley, and Middleton; while there is contemporary evidence to show that Massinger also had a share in some of his plays. There is little doubt that Fletcher collaborated with Shakespeare himself in *Henry VIII.* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Eleven plays of those credited to the joint authorship of Beaumont and Fletcher are known to have appeared during the lifetime of the former, and thirteen more were, as has been previously mentioned, produced by Fletcher after Beaumont's death. Thus with regard to at least one-half of these plays we have no certain knowledge of the collaboration of Beaumont, and little beyond conjecture to guide us in apportioning the contributions of the respective partners. It has been vaguely stated by contemporaries that Beaumont supplied the plots, Fletcher the dialogue; that Beaumont excelled in tragedy, Fletcher in comedy; that in the former the critical, and in the latter the creative, faculty dominated;—but on the whole it seems safest to accept these works as the joint product of two more than ordinary minds, without troubling ourselves as to the shares which each individual brought to the common stock. Suffice it to say that the plays which are the undoubted production of Fletcher after the death of his partner belong distinctively to the later, or post-Shakespearian school; and show, in themselves, that decadence which the later drama exhibits as a whole.

The works of Beaumont and Fletcher secured a contemporary popularity greater than was enjoyed by those of any other dramatist, and we have Dryden's testimony that in his time two of their plays were performed for one of Shakespeare's. They survived the Restoration and the generation after it; and some of them held

their own throughout the eighteenth century, and even well into the nineteenth. Their enormous wealth of ideas, strength and beauty of expression, and variety and interest of situation, sufficiently account for their place in the public favour. Their authors affected singular titles for many of their plays, such as *A King and No King*, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, *The Little French Lawyer*, *Wit at Several Weapons*, *Rule a Wife and have a Wife*. The dramas of Fletcher are distinguished by the complete absence of prose passages. It has been remarked that "his verse was a sufficiently flexible instrument to serve all turns"; consequently those passages of lighter comedy in which Shakespeare discards the trammels of metre are not allowed to break the flow of Fletcher's verse. A singular talent for imitation characterises many of the plays. Echoes of Marlowe's bombastic style occur in such passages as the following from *A King and No King*:—

She is no kin to me, nor shall she be;  
If she were any, I create her none:  
And which of you can question this? My power  
Is like the sea, that is to be obeyed,  
And not disputed with.

*The Maid's Tragedy* has something akin to the work of Kyd in the so-called "Tragedy of Blood," and the character of Bessus in *A King and No King* is perhaps superior to that of his prototype Bobadil, in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*.

Probably the highest level of these writers is reached in the tragi-comedy of *Philaster; or, Love Lies a-Bleeding*, "the loveliest though not the loftiest of tragic plays which we owe to the comrades or the successors of Shakespeare," of the writing of which probably the largest part was borne by Beaumont. The play throughout bears unmistakable traces of the influence of Shakespeare, and contains, in particular, parallels to passages in *Twelfth Night*, such as the following, addressed to a girl disguised as a page:—

Alas! what kind of grief can thy years know?

Thy brows and cheeks are smooth as waters be  
When no breath troubles them: believe me, boy,  
Care seeks out wrinkled brows and hollow eyes  
And builds himself caves, to abide in them.

Of the comedies, by far the best known and most characteristic is *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, a play suggested by *Don Quixote*, which had appeared, at Madrid, six years previously. It is still interesting as a picture of contemporary manners, and is a striking satire, not only parodying the romances of chivalry and such poems as Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, but also ridiculing the combined ignorance and realism of the citizen spectators of the London theatres.

Of the works of Fletcher produced independently of Beaumont, the most noticeable is the pastoral drama of *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1609), one of the loveliest poems in our literature, written almost entirely in rimed couplets, and containing the well-known lyric, imitated by Milton in his *Comus* :—

Sing his praises that doth keep  
Our flocks from harm,  
Pan, the father of our sheep;  
And arm in arm  
Tread we softly in a round,  
While the hollow neighb'ring ground  
Fills the music with her sound.

Indeed, the lyrical gift is much in evidence in all the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. "The songs which they contain," says Professor Saintsbury, "not seldom come near Shakespeare in quality, while they exceed him in quantity and variety. Indeed, it is not quite certain whether one of the most exquisite ("Roses, their sharp spines being gone") of this entire section of literature is Shakespeare's or theirs." The following are amongst the daintiest of the lyrics :—

Lay a garland on my hearse,  
Of the dismal yew;  
Maidens, willow branches bear;  
Say, I died true.  
My love was false, but I was firm  
From my hour of birth.  
Upon my buried body lie  
Lightly, gentle earth.

*The Maid's Tragedy.*

Weep no more, nor sigh, nor groan,  
Sorrow calls no time that's gone:  
Violets pluck'd, the sweetest rain  
Makes not fresh nor grow again;



Trim thy locks, look cheerfully,  
 Fate's hidden ends eyes cannot see.  
 Joys as wingéd dreams fly fast,  
 Why should sadness longer last?  
 Grief is but a wound to woe;  
 Gentlest fair, mourn, mourn no mo.

*The Queen of Corinth.*

Come, Sleep, and, with thy sweet deceiving,  
 Lock me in delight awhile;  
 Let some pleasing dreams beguile  
 All my fancies; that from thence  
 I may feel an influence,  
 All my powers of care bereaving!  
 Though but a shadow, but a sliding  
 Let me know some little joy!  
 We that suffer long annoy,  
 Are contented with a thought,  
 Through an idle fancy wrought:  
 Oh, let my joys have some abiding!

*The Woman-Hater.*

(i) The two last lyrics are entirely by Fletcher. Fletcher is the author of an additional verse to Shakespeare's celebrated song (*Measure for Measure*, iv. 1), "Take, O take those lips away!"

(ii) The most noteworthy point in the construction of Beaumont and Fletcher's blank verse is the fondness displayed for redundant syllables—especially for an eleventh syllable at the end of the line—a syllable, of course, without an accent. This peculiarity gave them greater freedom in composition, and enabled them better to reproduce the rapid conversation and sprightly sallies of the young men of the day. This is characteristic of Fletcher, and is prominent in the plays written by him after the death of Beaumont.

11. **Philip Massinger** was born at Salisbury in 1583, and educated at Oxford, which he left without taking a degree. He is the sole author of fifteen plays, and also wrote, in collaboration with Fletcher, Dekker, Field, Cyril Tourneur, and others, about thirty plays more, and his style was greatly influenced by that of Fletcher. He died in 1640 at Bankside.

Massinger was a skilful playwright, and few dramatists equal him in the construction and management of a plot. He was an admirable portrayer of character, and in such plays as *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* and *The City Madam* he faithfully depicts the life of his own day, originating in these the "Comedy of Manners" so entirely characteristic of the dramatic work of a later generation. But as a dramatist Massinger belongs to the decadence,

and his faults are those of the decline in the dramatic work of his time. In his tragedies he fails to identify himself with his characters—to throw that whole-souled sincerity into each, which alone can carry conviction and give reality to life. Of his tragedies *The Duke of Milan* and *The Fatal Dowry* are the best; the former, indeed, rises in places to a high pitch of dramatic excellence. His province was in the drama of pure romance, and in this his play of *The Great Duke of Florence* is the finest example.

(i) Sir Giles Overreach is the "hero" of *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*; and literature is permanently enriched by this illustration of a usurer and tyrant—a character worthy of Ben Jonson himself.

(ii) Massinger's verse, as Coleridge points out, differs little from prose, and he blends with ease and grace the natural rhythm of conversation with the flow of his varied metre.

(iii) He is indebted for many of his plots to Spanish and Italian writers, and he shows great skill in the art of suiting his plays to the requirements of the stage.

12. **John Ford** was born (1586) at Ilsington, in Devonshire, educated at Oxford, and entered of the Middle Temple. As a successful lawyer he does not seem to have been dependent for a living on his pen. His two most important plays are *Perkin Warbeck* and *The Broken Heart*. The latter play is one of the most strictly "classic" in the English language, and closely preserves the unities. In the opinion of Charles Lamb, "Ford was of the first order of poets. He sought for sublimity, not by parcels—in metaphors or in visible images—but directly where she has her full residence in the heart of man; in the actions and sufferings of the greatest minds." Professor Saintsbury, on the other hand, says: "In *The Broken Heart* he piles up the agony by the most preposterous and improbable means. Ford cannot do with nature: he must go against or beyond her to fetch effects of tragedy, and in doing this he stands excluded from the first order of poets." Without deciding between these conflicting opinions, it is sufficient to say that Ford as a writer of tragedy, and tragedy of the terrible order, takes a very high place. His mind was of a very melancholy cast; he dealt with the abnormal, and realised his effects with deliberate intention and the irresistible force of his genius.

13. **John Webster** (circa 1580—1625) was born—no one knows either when or where; but his chief work was executed in the two first decades of the seventeenth century. He is said to have been parish clerk of St. Andrew's, Holborn, and to have been a member of the Merchant 'Taylors' Company. Like most contemporary dramatists he worked in collaboration with others, amongst his literary partners being Dekker, Heywood, Rowley, and Middleton, and some plays of his independent authorship, which have since disappeared, are mentioned in Henslowe's *Diary*. Those of the latter class which remain are of such excellence as to entitle him to the very highest place as a writer of tragic melodrama. His two most famous plays are *Vittoria Corombona, or the White Devil*, and *The Duchess of Malfi*. Gloom, deepened into tragedy, is the keynote of both these plays. In the first the element of terror, in the second that of pathos, predominates. Few more striking creations are to be found in dramatic literature than the evil heroine of *The White Devil*. Triumphant vice, unblushing impudence, the unlimited power of a strong, evil nature over the weaker wickedness of her guilty accomplice, combine to make Vittoria Corombona as real to us as Shakespeare's Goneril and Regan. In the trial scene her matchless daring and quick-witted resourcefulness remind us of the Iago of Shakespeare's *Othello*. "This White Devil of Italy," says Charles Lamb, "sets off a bad cause so speciously, and pleads with such an innocence-resembling boldness, that we seem to see that matchless beauty of her face which inspires such gay confidence into her." And she dies with the same dreadful resoluteness as she had lived, her fitting epitaph the words spoken by herself:—

My soul, like to a ship in a black storm,  
Is driven, I know not whither.

*The Duchess of Malfi* forms a fitting pendant and contrast to this picture of female depravity. The heroine is less interesting than Vittoria, but excites our pity by her cruel and undeserved sufferings. Her very weakness, which would be repellent under more favourable conditions, deepens our sympathy with her amid the dreadful surroundings in ~~which~~ <sup>which</sup> she is placed. The dismal chant of the Madmen—

O let us howl some heavy note,  
Some deadly, dogged howl—

is a fitting prelude to the ghastly death-scene with the requiem over the Duchess by her murderer brother:—

Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle: she died young.

Webster was greatly admired by Charles Lamb, who says of him: "To move a horror skilfully, to touch a soul to the quick, to lay upon fear as much as it can bear, to wean and weary a life till it is ready to drop, and then step in with mortal instruments to take its last forfeit—this only a Webster can do. Inferior geniuses may 'upon horror's head horrors accumulate,' but they cannot do this." The dirge in *The White Devil* is one of the most remarkable lyrics in our language:—

Call for the robin red-breast, and the wren,  
Since o'er shady groves they hover,  
And with leaves and flowers do cover  
The friendless bodies of unburied men.  
Call unto his funeral dole  
The ant, the field-mouse, and the mole  
To rear him hillocks that shall keep him warm,  
And (when gay tombs are robb'd) sustain no harm;  
But keep the wolf far thence, that's foe to men,  
For with his nails he'll dig them up again.

Of this, Lamb says: "I never saw anything like this dirge except the ditty, 'Full fathom five thy father lies,' in *The Tempest*. As that is of the water watery, so this is of the earth earthy."

14. **Thomas Dekker** (died in 1637) was born in London about the year 1570. Little is known of his life. He led the usual wild existence of young playwrights; and he drew on that experience for his striking description of scenes in inns, taverns, and suburban pleasure-houses. Besides those plays which are his independent production, he wrote a number in collaboration with Webster, Massinger, and others. Charles Lamb speaks of him as "having poetry enough for anything"; and another critic maintains that "his best plays rank with the masterpieces of the Elizabethan drama." His dramatic writing shows great sweetness, and remarkable, even irresistible, pathos; though much of it exhibits a roughness and irregularity, sometimes amounting to chaos—due probably to too great haste in composition. His



earliest play was *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, which describes the humours, jokes, and jests of the citizen of London on a day of feast. Dekker knew London thoroughly—inside and outside. This knowledge is also seen in his prose works, *The Bellman of London* and *The Gull's Horn-Book*. He had been several times in gaol, and Henslowe records in his *Diary* that he had to make a payment "to discharge Mr. Dekker out of the Counter<sup>1</sup> in the Poultry." He lay at least three years, probably for debt, in the King's Bench Prison, which he describes as "an university where men pay more dear for their wit than anywhere." "The bed in which I lay," he adds, "was filled with thornes instead of feathers, my pillow a rugged flint." In 1604 he had a large share in devising and preparing the "Magnificent Entertainment on King James's Passage through London"; and he also was often employed in preparing pageants in honour of new Lord Mayors. His best play is probably *Fortunatus; or, The Wishing-Cap*; but his rapidity—the prolific output of so much dramatic matter—prevented his plays attaining that excellence which alone lasts. He had vigour, an abundant rhetoric, an easy and natural humour; and he possessed also rare lyrical gifts. Some of his lines have passed into the common stock of our literature:—

Patience, my lord! why, 'tis the soul of peace;  
Of all the virtues 'tis nearest kin to Heaven:  
It makes men look like gods. The best of men  
That e'er wore earth about him, was a sufferer,  
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit:  
The first true gentleman that ever breathed.

It is from Dekker also that we have received the line:—

We ne'er are angels till our passions die.

*The Pleasant Comedy of Patient Grissell* contains one of the most beautiful songs in all Elizabethan literature:—

Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers?  
O sweet content!  
Art thou rich, yet is thy mind perplexed?  
O punishment!  
Dost thou laugh to see how fools are vexed  
To add to golden numbers, golden numbers?

<sup>1</sup> Or *Compter*, a prison; from the Latin *computare*, to reckon.

O sweet content !

Work apace, apace, apace, apace ;

† Honest labour bears a lovely face ;

Then hey noney, noney, hey noney, noney.

Canst drink the waters of the crisped spring ?

O sweet content !

Swim'st thou in wealth, yet sink'st in thine own tears ?

O punishment !

Then he that patiently want's burden bears,

No burden bears, but is a king, a king !

O sweet content !

Work apace, apace, etc.

"Nor does Dekker rank much below Shakespeare or Fletcher for his lyrics, the best of which, 'Cold's the wind and wet's the rain,' 'Virtue's smiles, cry Holiday !' 'Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers?' 'Cast away care,' and others, are better known than the plays containing them."—  
SAINTSBURY.

15. **George Chapman** (1558—1634), a great poet and accomplished dramatist, was born at Hitchin Hill, in Hertfordshire. He passed two years at Trinity College, Oxford ; but seems to have been a member of both Universities. His translation of Homer (p. 166) brought him more fame than all his plays. Like other dramatists, he was intimate with Edmund Spenser, Ben Jonson, Fletcher, and other great writers of the time ; and was, indeed, an exceptional favourite with them. His first play was *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria* (1596), but the best known are those which have to do with the contemporary history of France. The most famous are *Bussy d'Ambois* (1607), and *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois* (1613). Two other well-known dramas are *The Conspiracy* and *The Tragedy of Charles, Duke of Byron* (1608). Content and prosperity seem to have been his companions through life. Unlike most of his contemporaries, he was both temperate and pious ; and the quality of temperance is manifest in his plays. The following is a fair specimen of Chapman's dramatic style :—

I tell thee Love is Nature's second sun,  
Causing a spring of virtues where he shines :  
And as, without the sun, the world's quiet eye,  
All colours, beauties both of Art and Nature,  
Are given in vain to men ; so, without Love,  
All beauties bred in women are in vain,  
All virtues bred in men lie buried ;  
For Love informs them as the sun doth colours.

Shakespeare's lines (2 *Henry VI.*, III. ii.).

What stronger breastplate than a heart untainted?  
Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just,  
And he but naked, tho' lock'd up in steel,  
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted,

are well known; and the following from Chapman, on the strength that comes from a good conscience, form a remarkable parallel:—

Before, I was secure 'gainst death and hell;  
But now am subject to the heartless fear  
Of every shadow, and of every breath,  
And would change firmness with an aspen leaf;  
So confident a spotless conscience is,  
So weak a guilty.

The following, too, is in Shakespeare's vein:—

How blind is Pride? What eagles we are still  
In matters that belong to other men—  
What beetles in our own!

Wood says of him: "Chapman was a person of most reverend aspect, religious and temperate; qualities rarely meeting in a poet."

16. **John Marston** (1575—1634) was born in London, the son of a lecturer in law in the Middle Temple. He was a satirist, a dramatist, and a divine; but his dramas do not by any means place him among the great Elizabethans, much of his dramatic work being an echo—and a distant echo—of Shakespeare; and in all, his defects—bad taste, coarseness, and want of judgment—are conspicuous. He graduated at Brasenose College, Oxford, in 1594; and he was Rector of Christchurch, in Hampshire, from 1616 to 1631. His best plays are *Antonio and Mellida* and *The Malcontent*. He was a great satirist, and his most noted work of this kind is the poem, *The Scourge of Villanie*. His language is generally high-strung, hectoring, and even bombastic, though, as it has been said, "his gloomy rhetoric not very seldom becomes real eloquence." He died in 1634, and was buried beneath the altar of the Temple Church, under a stone on which was inscribed, "*Oblivioni Sacrum*." The following is a specimen of his style:—

Thou blessed Mercury,  
Prepare a banquet fit to please the gods.  
Let spear-like music breathe delicious tones  
Into our mortal ears; perfume the house  
With odoriferous scents, sweeter than myrrh,  
Or all the spices in Panchaia.

But he was now and then capable of greatness in language, and has many fine passages, with magnificent images, on night and morning:—

Night, like a masque, has entered heaven's great hall,  
With thousand torches ushering the way.

And in these lines:—

See, the dapple grey coursers of the morn  
Beat up the light with their bright silver hooves  
And chase it through the sky!

Again:—

Darkness is fled: look! infant morn hath drawn  
Bright silver curtains 'bout the couch of night;  
And now Aurora's horse trots azure rings,  
Breathing fair light about the firmament.

"His rank is high in his own regiment; and the Colonel of that regiment is Ben Jonson. . . . But it is no less certain that the few finest passages which attest the power and the purity of his poems as a poet, are above comparison with any such examples of tragic poetry as can be attributed with certainty, or with plausibility, to the hand that has left us no acknowledged works in that line, except *Sejanus his Fall* and *Catiline his Conspiracy*."—ALGERNON SWINBURNE.

17. **Thomas Middleton** (1570—1627) is supposed to have been born in London about the year 1570, and nothing is known of his early life. He commenced his dramatic career when about thirty, and wrote a large number of plays and masques. He became City Chronologer in 1620 (in which office he was succeeded by Ben Jonson), his duties being to "set down all memorable acts of the City and occurrences thereof." *A Trick to Catch the Old One*, *The Widow*, and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* are his best comedies. *A Game of Chess* is a fine patriotic play, the receipts from which, for nine days, are said to have amounted to fifteen hundred pounds. But the play gave so great offence to Gondomar, the Spanish Ambassador, that it had to be withdrawn, and author and actors were summoned to appear before the Privy Council, when the former was committed to prison, and the latter were bound in £300, and for some time forbidden to play. *The Changeling* and *Women Beware Women* are Middleton's great contributions to the "Tragedies of Blood." Mr. Swinburne says of Middleton: "We are more than justified in asserting that a critic who denies him a high place among the poets of England



must be not merely ignorant of the qualities which involve a right or confer a claim to the position, but incapable of curing his ignorance by any process of study."

The following passage, from *Women beware Women*, shows Middleton at his best. Leantio is returning after a short absence from home :—

How near am I now to a happiness  
That Earth exceeds not ! not another like it :  
The treasures of the deep are not so precious  
As are the concealed comforts of a man  
Locked up in woman's love. I scent the air  
Of blessings when I come but near the house.  
What a delicious breath marriage sends forth !  
The violet-bed's not sweeter . . . now for a welcome  
Able to draw men's envies upon man ;  
A kiss now, that will hang upon my lip  
As sweet as morning-dew upon a rose,  
And full as long.

The following exquisite lines are as perfect in form and imagery as Elizabethan literature can show :—

Upon those lips, the sweet fresh buds of youth,  
The holy dew of prayer lies, like pearl  
Dropt from the opening eyelids of the morn  
Upon a bashful rose.

18. **Thomas Heywood**, of whom little is known, died about 1650. He was a prolific playwright, and he said himself that he had a hand in 220 plays. Of his own dramas only twenty-four exist. He was of a Lincolnshire family, and is said to have been a Fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge. He wrote several historical dramas, of which *Edward IV.* is the best known. His comedies treat of country and London life, but in dealing with the latter he was much inferior to Dekker and Middleton. His best play, and one of the first domestic tragedies in the language, is *A Woman Killed with Kindness*.

The following is a passage from the latter :—

O God ! O God ! that it were possible  
To undo things done ; to call back yesterday !  
That Time could turn up his swift sandy glass,  
To untell the days, and to redeem these hours !  
Or that the sun  
Could, rising from the west, draw his coach backward,

Take from the account of time so many minutes,  
Till he had all these seasons called again,  
Those minutes, and those actions done in them,  
Even from her first offence.

The following is a beautiful example of his lyric verse :—

Pack, clouds, away, and welcome day !  
With night we banish sorrow ;  
Sweet air blow soft ; mount, lark, aloft,  
To give my love good morrow.  
Wings from the wind, to please her mind,  
Notes from the lark I'll borrow ;  
Bird, prune thy wing, nightingale, sing,  
To give my love good morrow.  
To give my love good morrow,  
Notes from them all I'll borrow.  
  
Wake from thy nest, robin red-breast,  
Sing, birds, in every furrow,  
And from each bill let music shrill  
Give my fair love good morrow ;  
Blackbird and thrush, in every bush,  
Stare, linnet, and cock-sparrow,  
You pretty elves, amongst yourselves  
Sing my fair love good morrow ;  
To give my love good morrow,  
Sing, birds, in every furrow.

19. **Cyril Tourneur** (1575—1626) saw service in the Low Countries, was made secretary to Cecil in the expedition to Cadiz, but being seized with illness on his return was put ashore at Kinsale and died. The dramas upon which his fame rests are *The Atheist's Tragedy* and *The Revenger's Tragedy*, the latter being a work much superior to, and more mature than, the former. Although there is some fine writing in these plays, horror in them reaches its climax, and the ingenuity of human wickedness runs mad.

That he studied Shakespeare and caught his style may be seen from the following :—

Be not displeas'd if on  
The altar of his tomb I sacrifice  
My tears. They are the jewels of my love  
Dissolved into grief, and fall upon  
His blasted Spring as April dew upon  
A sweet young blossom shak'd before the time.

20. **James Shirley** (1596—1666), the last of the great Elizabethan

dramatists, was born in London, and educated at Merchant Taylors' School. He seems to have studied both at Oxford and Cambridge. At first a clergyman, he gave up his living, and was made headmaster of the Grammar School of St. Albans. Returning to London in 1625, he took chambers in Gray's Inn, "and set up as a play-maker." He became one of the most prolific dramatic writers of his day, and was the author of at least thirty-nine plays. His best tragedy is *The Cardinal*; his best comedies are *The Wedding*, *The Witty Fair One*, and *The Lady of Pleasure*. When the Civil War broke out in 1642, Shirley "exchanged the pen for the sword" and took service on the Royalist side under his patron, the Earl of Newcastle. The Civil War ended, he returned to London; but the theatres were closed (they had been closed since 1642), his occupation was gone, and he had to betake himself to teaching once more; and to this work he was obliged to keep till the end of his days. In 1666 he was living in a house in Whitefriars; but the Great Fire of London drove him and his family from the City, and soon after he died of grief and from the effects of exposure. Charles Lamb says of him that "he was the last of a great race, all of whom spoke nearly the same language, and had a set of moral feelings and notions in common. A new language and quite a new turn of tragic and comic interest came in with the Restoration." He undoubtedly possesses the power of language that was the heritage of the great Elizabethan dramatists. Thus, in one of his plays, FAME says, "This is the house of Love!" To which FORTUNE replies:—

It cannot be,  
 This place has too much shade, and looks as if  
 It had been quite forgotten of the spring  
 And sun-beams. Love affects society  
 And heat: here all is cold as the airs of winter;  
 No harmony to catch the busy ear  
 Of passengers, no object of delight  
 To take the wand'ring eyes; no song, no groan  
 Of lovers, no complaint of willow garlands:  
 Love has a beacon on his palace-top  
 Of flaming hearts, to call the weary pilgrim  
 To rest, and dwell with him; I see no fire  
 To threaten, or to warm: can Love dwell here?

But Shirley, at the present time, is best known for two noble lyrics—among the noblest in the language. The first is:—

The glories of our blood and state  
Are shadows, not substantial things;  
There is no armour against fate;  
Death lays his icy hand on kings.  
Sceptre and crown  
Must tumble down,  
And in the dust be equal made  
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

The other great lyric has the same *motif* and the same noble style:—

Victorious men of earth; no more  
Proclaim how wide your empires are;  
Though you bind in every shore,  
And your triumphs reach as far  
As night or day,  
Yet you, proud monarchs, must obey,  
And mingle with forgotten ashes, when  
Death calls ye to the crowd of common men.



## CHAPTER X.

---

### JACOBEOAN POETRY AND PROSE.

1. **Introductory.**—The reign of James I. (1603—1625) saw the decline of the enormous wealth of dramatic genius and talent which had adorned the reign of Elizabeth; and no younger school of dramatists rose to fill the place of the older men. **Ben Jonson**, who was even greater and stronger as a lyrist than as a dramatist, and **George Chapman**, who wrote what is still our best translation of Homer, were the chief links which joined the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages. The latter age shows a number of poets who wrote verses, many of which have a place in the minds and memories of readers, and still live to inspire younger poets. Among them the most prominent are **Samuel Daniel** ("the well-languaged Daniel"); **Michael Drayton**, the author of the *Polyolbion*; **Sir John Davies**, who packed a great deal of deep and true philosophy into clear and well-built quatrains; **Thomas Campion**, by profession a doctor of physic, by inclination a fine musician, and by genius one of the purest and sweetest of our lyric poets; **William Browne**, the best pastoral poet in our literature; **George Wither**, a country poet, who sang the praises and the delights of the fields even when lying in a town prison; and **John Donne**, the Dean of St. Paul's, whom power and fulness of thought hindered in attaining anything like smoothness of verse and clearness of expression. To these might be added, though on a lower plane, the two **Fletchers**—**Giles** and **Phineas**—who belonged to the school of Spenser, but who were themselves men of some genius and great talent; and **Edward Fairfax**, who translated Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*.

2. **Samuel Daniel** (1562—1619), the son of a music-master, was born at Taunton, in Somerset. He was educated at Oxford, and afterwards passed much of his life as tutor or companion in the households of some noble families—the Cliffords, the Wriothesleys, and the Herberts. In the year 1603—the year of the accession of James I.—he was appointed Master of the Queen's Revels; and in this capacity he had to superintend the production of masques and other court plays. His longest poem is the *History of the Civil Wars of York and Lancaster* (1595—1609), in eight books. The verse is the ordinary iambic pentameter, but disposed in stanzas of eight lines, with alternating rhymes in the first six. His style is remarkable for its purity, clearness, and ease; but it is deficient in colour, vigour, and animation. Much of it is as modern as Wordsworth himself. The following is a stanza from his *Epistle to the Countess of Cumberland*.

He that of such a height hath built his mind,  
 And reared the dwelling of his thoughts so strong,  
 As neither fear nor hope can shake the frame  
 Of his resolvéd powers; nor all the wind  
 Of vanity or malice pierce to wrong  
 His settled peace, or to disturb the same:  
 What a fair seat hath he, from whence he may  
 The boundless wastes and wilds of man survey.

The following is a stanza from the soliloquy of Richard II. the morning before his murder in Pontefract Castle (he is contrasting his own lot with that of the shepherd):—

Thou sitt'st at home safe by thy quiet fire,  
 And hear'st of others' harms, but fearest none;  
 And there thou tell'st of kings, and who aspire,  
 Who fall, who rise, who triumph, who do moan.  
 Perhaps thou talk'st of me, and dost enquire  
 Of my restraint; why here I live alone;  
 And pitiest this my miserable fall;  
 For pity must have part;—envy not all.

3. **Michael Drayton** (1563—1631), who was born at Atherstone, in Warwickshire, seems to have spent his youth as a page in the house of "a person of quality." He was not a dramatist; but from the year 1598 to 1603—the last five years of Elizabeth's reign—he is said to have been "one of Henslowe's hacks," engaged in patching and botching old plays, and making them look "as

*Patching miserably  
 —a very miserable*

good as new." He published pastorals, poetry on historic subjects, and other works; but that by which he is best known is the *Polyolbion*.<sup>1</sup> This is a long poem in thirty thousand lines on the different counties of England—describing their landscapes, hills, rivers, woods, and their productions. The verse is the Alexandrine, with the caesura always in the middle, so that, indeed, it would be more correct to say that it is written in iambic trimeter. Mr. Gosse calls it "a masterpiece of topographical ingenuity, a huge British gazetteer in broken-backed twelve-syllable verse, and a portent of misplaced energy." The following is a fair specimen of this work:—

In this our spacious Isle,	I think there is not one,
But he hath heard some talk	of him and Little John;
And to the end of time,	the tales shall ne'er be done
Of Scarlock, George-a-Greene,	and Much the miller's son,
Of Tuck the merry friar,	which many a sermon made
In praise of Robin Hood,	his outlaws and their trade.
An hundred valiant men	had this brave Robin Hood
Still ready at his call,	that bowmen were right good,
All clad in Lincoln green,	with caps of red and blue;
His fellow's winded horn,	not one of them but knew,
When setting to their lips	their little bugles shrill
The warbling echoes waked	from every dale and hill.

It is plain, from the method of printing this extract, that Drayton's caesura was never varied, and that most of his verse consisted simply of pieces of prose cut into short lengths. It must not be supposed that the *Polyolbion* is all dull stuff; there are bright passages, poetic touches, and sometimes even brilliant phrases. There is one passage where indignation rouses the passion of the poet when he sees the ruthless cutting of some of the denizens of the old English forests:—

Our trees so hacked above the ground,  
That where their lofty tops the neighbouring counties crowned,  
Their trunks, like aged folks, now bare and naked stand,  
As for revenge to Heaven each held a withered hand.

He wrote other and better poems in *The Barons' Wars* and *England's Heroical Epistles*. He is also the author of one of the best sonnets in the language and of one of the noblest lyrics. The sonnet may be entitled—

<sup>1</sup> This word means "rich and fertile in many ways."

## RENUNCIATION AND REPENTANCE.

Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part ;  
 Nay I have done ; you get no more of me :  
 And I am glad, yea, glad with all my heart,  
 That thus so cleanly I myself can free ;  
 Shake hands for ever, cancel all our vows,  
 And when we meet at any time again,  
 Be it not seen in either of our brows  
 That we one jot of former love retain.  
 Now at the last gasp of Love's latest breath,  
 When, his pulse failing, Passion speechless lies,  
 When Faith is kneeling by his bed of death,  
 And Innocence is closing up his eyes,  
 Now, if thou would'st, when all have given him over,  
 From death to life thou might'st him yet recover !

The lyric is the well-known—

## AGINCOURT.

Fair stood the wind for France,  
 When we our sails advance,  
 Nor now to prove our chance  
 Longer will tarry ;  
 But putting to the main,  
 At Caux, the mouth of Seine,  
 With all his martial train  
 Landed King Harry, etc.

4. **Sir John Davies** (1569—1626) was born at Tisbury, in Wiltshire. He went in 1585 as a commoner to Queen's College, Oxford, was called to the Bar in 1595, and in 1603 James I. made him Solicitor-General for Ireland, and knighted him. His chief poem is *Nosce Teipsum* (Know Thyself)—a poem on the immortality of the soul—and *Hymns of Astraea*—a set of twenty-six acrostics in praise of Queen Elizabeth. In the first of these poems he employs the solemn four-line stanza (of iambic pentameters) which Dryden made use of in his *Annus Mirabilis* and Gray in his well-known *Elegy*. "*Nosce Teipsum*," says Professor Saintsbury, "is full of passages finely thought and expressed in a stately music." The following verses give a fair idea of his style of thought and expression :—

Oh ! what is man, great Maker of mankind !  
 That Thou to him so great respect dost bear ;  
 That Thou adorn'st him with so bright a mind,  
 Mak'st him a king, and even an angel's peer ?



Thou leav'st Thy print in other works of Thine,  
 But Thy whole image Thou in man hast writ ;  
 There cannot be a creature more divine,  
 Except, like Thee, it should be infinite.

5. **George Chapman** (1559—1634).—The dramatic works of Chapman have been already dealt with in the preceding chapter; his purely poetic works consist chiefly of his translation of Homer's *Iliad*<sup>1</sup> and *Odyssey*,<sup>2</sup> *The Tears of Peace*, and the completion of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*. The first part of the translation of the *Iliad* was published in 1598; the whole translation appeared in 1611. The translation of the *Odyssey* appeared in 1614; the two translations bound up together were published in 1616—the year of Shakespeare's death. The *Iliad* is produced in long lines of fourteen syllables, which may be regarded as the ordinary ballad metre, consisting of a line of four accents, followed by a line of three. The following is an example :—

From his bright helm and shield did burn  
     a most unwearied fire  
 Like rich Autumnus' golden lamp,  
     whose brightness men admire  
 Past all the other host of stars,  
     when with his cheerful face  
 Fresh washed in lofty Ocean-waves,  
     he does the skies enchase.

Here is the description of the visit paid by Ulysses to the shrine of Apollo at Chrysa, in the First Book of the *Iliad* :—

The youths crown'd cups of wine,  
 Drunk off, and fill'd again to all.  
     That day was held divine,  
 And spent in paeans to the Sun,  
     who heard with pleas'd ear ;  
 When whose bright chariot stoop'd to sea,  
     and twilight hid the clear ;  
 All soundly on their cables slept,  
     even till the night was worn.

<sup>1</sup> *Iliad* (Greek 'Ιλιάς, from 'Ιλιον = Troy), one of the two great Greek epic poems, ascribed to Homer, on the subject of the ten years' siege of Troy.

<sup>2</sup> *Odyssey*, the second great Greek epic, also ascribed to Homer, relates the wanderings of 'Οδυσσεύς = Ulysses, King of Ithaca, the most cunning of the Greeks.

And when the Lady of the light,  
     the rosy-finger'd Morn,  
 Rose from the hills, all fresh arose,  
     and to the camp retired,  
 Apollo with a fore-right wind  
     their swelling bark inspired.

These few lines are sufficient to show with what a freshness, vigour, and swing Chapman translated the "limitless billows" of the Homeric hexameter into our well-known ballad metre. While translating Homer, Chapman introduced into the English language many very striking compound epithets—such as "far-shooting" Phoebus (like "far-darting Apollo"), the "many-headed hill," "the ivory-wristed queen." The *Odyssey* is written in the usual iambic pentameter couplet. The following lines, *The Prayer of Polyphemus*, give an illustration :—

Then flew fierce vows to Neptune, both his hands  
 To star-born heaven cast : O thou that all lands  
 Gird'st in thy ambient circle, and in air  
 Shakest the curl'd tresses of thy sapphire hair,  
 If I be thine, or thou may'st justly vaunt  
 Thou art my father, hear me now, and grant  
 That this Ulysses, old Laertes' son,  
 That dwells in Ithaca, and name hath won  
 Of City-ruiner, may never reach  
 His natural region.

His original poems, such as *The Tears of Peace*, inscribed to Prince Henry,<sup>1</sup> though written in a style often obscure, turbid, and involved, yet contain many lines and even continuous passages of great vigour and beauty, such as the couplet :—

Free sufferance for the truth makes sorrow sing,  
 And mourning far more sweet than banqueting.

6. **Thomas Campion** (1567—1620) was by profession a physician in the closing years of Elizabeth's reign, who had studied at Cambridge. He was devoted to music, especially to the lute ; and he had in his lifetime the reputation of being one of the best Elizabethan musicians. He wrote both the words and

<sup>1</sup> Henry (Frederick), Prince of Wales, eldest son of James I., born February 19th, 1594, died November 6th, 1612. He was a prince of great promise, and his early and unexpected death was the occasion of an outburst of elegies from nearly all the contemporary writers.

the music of his songs, and he ranks among the very finest of our lyric poets. Between the years 1601 and 1617 he wrote four *Books of Airs*. His lyrics are full of the noblest as well as the sweetest and quaintest lines, and his English is always pure and strong. One of his songs begins with—

Kind are her answers,  
But her performance keeps no day;

and the line—

O did ever voice so sweet but only feign?

is of an extraordinarily supple movement in rhythm. In another, called *Her Sacred Bower*, he gives us the lines—

Her sun-like beauty shines so fair  
Her spring can never fade.

He has also the grand air of the Elizabethans, as shown in the following lines:—

When thou must home to shades of underground,  
Of tourneys and great challenges of knights!

Perhaps the following is the most characteristic specimen that can be given of his lyrics:—

Follow your saint, follow with accents sweet!  
Haste you, sad notes, fall at her flying feet!  
There, wrapped in cloud of sorrow, pity move,  
And tell the ravisher of my soul I perish for her love;  
But if she scorn my never-ceasing pain,  
Then burst with sighing in her sight, and ne'er return again.  
All that I sang still to her praise did tend,  
Still she was first, still she my songs did end;  
Yet she my love and music both doth fly,  
The music that her echo is and beauty's sympathy.  
Then let my notes pursue her scornful flight!  
It shall suffice that they were breathed and died for her delight.

Everything in this lyric—thought, feeling, expression, movement—is genuinely English; and it would be hard to find its equal in the works of any living poet. Campion shows, says a recent critic, “how high was the lyric average of ‘the spacious times’ which bred it.”

7. **William Browne** (1591?—1643) was born at Tavistock, in Devonshire, and educated at the Grammar School, whence he passed to Exeter College, Oxford, about the beginning of the reign

of James I. The lovely scenes of his native county inspired him with the desire of being a poet. He died in 1645 at Ottery St. Mary, the village in which Coleridge was born. His best-known poem is *Britannia's Pastorals*; and it was, with Spenser, the favourite reading of Keats. Addressing his native county of Devonshire, famous for beauty and fertility, and also for so many famous men, he says:—

Hail thou, my native soil! thou blessed plot  
Whose equal all the world affordeth not!  
Show me who can so many crystal rills,  
Such sweet-clothed valleys, or aspiring hills,  
Such wood-ground, pastures, quarries, wealthy mines,  
Such rocks in whom the diamond fairly shines;  
And if the earth can show the like again,  
Yet will she fail in her sea-ruling men.  
Time never can produce men to o'er take  
The fames of Grenville,<sup>1</sup> Davis,<sup>2</sup> Gilbert,<sup>3</sup> Drake,<sup>4</sup>  
Or worthy Hawkins,<sup>5</sup> or of thousands more  
That by their power made the Devonian shore  
Mock the proud Tagus; for whose richest spoil  
The boasting Spaniard left the Indian soil  
Bankrupt of store, knowing it would quit cost  
By winning this, though all the rest were lost.

The verse is the ordinary iambic pentameter couplet, with a fairly varied handling of the pause. This change of position of the caesura is perhaps better seen in the following:—

As in an evening, when the gentle air  
Breathes to the sullen night a soft repair,<sup>6</sup>  
I oft have sat on Thames' sweet bank, to hear  
My friend with his sweet touch to charm mine ear,

<sup>1</sup> Grenville, Sir Richard, cousin of Sir Walter Raleigh; was hero of the fight of the *Revenge* against fifty-three Spanish ships of war, described by Raleigh (p. 77), and celebrated in Lord Tennyson's poem.

<sup>2</sup> Davis, John, an English navigator and author; born at Dartmouth, about 1530, killed in the Strait of Malacca, 1605 (see p. 75).

<sup>3</sup> Gilbert, Sir Humphrey, half-brother of Sir Walter Raleigh; was drowned off the Azores, 1583. His last words were, "We are as near heaven by sea as by land."

<sup>4</sup> Drake, Sir Francis, was the first English captain who "gazed on the Pacific," and the first English circumnavigator of the globe. He commanded under Lord Howard against the Spanish Armada.

<sup>5</sup> Hawkins, Sir John, was the first who practised the English slave-trade; he was rear-admiral under Lord Howard against the Spanish Armada.

<sup>6</sup> *repair* = salute.



When he hath played—as well he can—some strain  
 That likes<sup>1</sup> me, straight I ask the same again;  
 And he, as gladly granting, strikes it o'er  
 With some sweet relish was forgot before.

Browne is often too fluent, and slips too easily into puerile verse; but, in his best lines, he shows a sense of beauty and music which we hardly find in our literature till we come to Keats.

8. **George Wither** (1588—1667) was born at Bentworth, in Hampshire, and in *Abuses Stript and Whipt* speaks of "Bentworth's beechy shadows." Having studied at Magdalen College, Oxford, 1604 to 1606, which he left without a degree, he settled in London to read law. In 1612 he published *Prince Henrie's Obsequies*, on the death of the Prince of Wales, a poem of forty-five stanzas in sonnet form. In 1613 appeared *Epithalamia; or, Nuptiall Poems*, on the marriage of the Princess Elizabeth to the Elector Palatine. The same year he published, under the title of *Abuses Stript and Whipt*, a volume, consisting of satires, named after the human passions, and a poem called *The Scourge*, for which he was thrown into the Marshalsea, but eventually released on the intercession of the Princess Elizabeth. While in prison he composed one of his longest poems, *The Shepherd's Hunting*, in which the poet, as Phil 'Areté (Lover of Virtue), with ten couple of dogs, his satires, hunts the wild beasts of human society. He was a close friend of William Browne, and contributed portions of that poet's *Shepherd's Pipe*. He is the "Roget" of that poem, Browne himself being "Willie," and is referred to by Browne in *Britannia's Pastorals*—

Davies and Wither, by whose Muse's power,  
 A natural day to me seems but an hour.

In 1622 Wither collected and published his earlier poems as *Juvenilia*, and a new poem entitled *Faire-Virtue, the Mistresse of Phil 'Areté*, amongst the interspersed songs of which occurs the well-known—

Shall I, wasting in despair,  
 Die because a woman's fair?

Wither was in London during the Plague of 1625, and wrote a *Historie of the Pestilence*. He took the Parliamentary side in the

<sup>1</sup> *likes* = *pleases*.

Civil War, in the course of which he fell into the hands of the Royalists, who proceeded to hang him. But Sir John Denham interfered and saved his life, with the jocular and friendly remark that, as long as Wither lived, he (Denham) "would not be the worst poet in England." At the Restoration he was again thrown into prison, but was released under a bond for good behaviour. He died in the precincts of the Savoy in 1667, and was buried "within the east door" of the Church of the Savoy Hospital, in the Strand. Dryden says of him:—

He fagotted his notions as they fell,  
And if they rimed and rattled all was well.

Wither had nevertheless a strong and genuine love of poetry and Nature, and Lamb shows his usual insight in the remark: "Quarles is a wittier writer, but Wither lays more hold on the heart."

In some lines in *The Shepherd's Hunting* on the Companionship of the Muse, written in prison, Wither sets forth his own feelings with vigour and grace and truth:—

And though for her sake I'm crost,  
Though my best hopes I have lost,  
And knew she would make my trouble  
Ten times more than ten times double:  
I should love and keep her too  
Spite of all the world could do. . . .  
She doth for my comfort stay,  
And keeps many cares away. . . .  
She doth tell me where to borrow  
Comfort in the midst of sorrow:  
Makes the desolate place  
To her presence be a grace;  
And the blackest discontents  
To be pleasing ornaments.

And, in another passage, he says of his Muse:—

Her true beauty leaves behind  
Apprehensions in my mind,  
Of more sweetness than all art  
Or inventions can impart;  
Thoughts too deep to be expressed  
And too strong to be suppressed.

These are lines that were after Wordsworth's own heart; and, in

one of his prefaces, he quotes them as an example of what a true love of poetry can do for a harassed soul. Mr. Saintsbury says: "If genuine pastoral sweetness—the sense of country and country joys—is anywhere in English poetry, it is in Wither, who has much besides." In addition to Wither's love of the country and his remarkable skill in expressing that love, he possessed a deep sense of humanity and of the beauty of human relations. Thus, in the poem entitled *The Widow*, we find the following stanza:—

The voice which I did more esteem  
Than music in her sweetest key,  
Those eyes which unto me did seem  
More comfortable than the day;  
Those now by me, as they have been,  
Shall never more be heard or seen,  
But what I once enjoyed in them  
Shall seem hereafter as a dream.

9. **Phineas and Giles Fletcher.**—These two brothers were the sons of another Giles Fletcher, Doctor of Laws, himself a poet of some quality, and the author of *Licia, Poems of Love*. They were also first cousins of John Fletcher, the dramatist. **Phineas Fletcher** (1582—1650), the elder brother, was educated at Eton and Cambridge, and became Rector of Hilgay, a parish in Norfolk. His chief poem is *The Purple Island*. One might suppose this was some island in the tropics; it is man—his bodily and mental frame; and the poem is an elaborate description of his veins, arteries, bones and muscles; of his intellect, his passions, his virtues and his vices. The veins and arteries are described as streams and rivers; the bones and muscles as hills and dales; and so on. Intellect is the Prince of the Purple Island (the "Isle of Man"); and this prince has a cabinet of eight councillors—Fancy, Memory, the Five Senses, and Common Sense. The Island is strongly fortified, but is assailed by the Vices; and between the Vices and the Virtues a fierce contest is entered upon for the possession of the soul. An Angel (James I.!) interposes and ends the combat by giving victory to the Virtues. Fletcher's verse is a septet; the first four lines rime alternately; and then comes a triplet of the same rime. The following is an average verse: it describes the future of the Prince of the Island (*i.e.*, the Intellect),

the Judge's Viceroy, who, "if he lives as knowing he may die, bathes his crowned head in blest eternity":—

There golden stars set in the crystal snow;  
 There dainty joys laugh at uneasy care;  
 There day no night, delight no end shall know;  
 Sweets without surfeit, fulness without spare,  
 And by its spending, grows in happiness;  
 There God Himself in glory's lavishness  
 Diffused in all, to all, is all full blessedness.

Phineas Fletcher was called by Quarles "the Spenser of his age"; but this is not the stanza of Spenser, which has nine lines. The last six cantos of the poem, which describe the mental and moral qualities of man, are written in a freer and happier style.

10. **Giles Fletcher** (1588—1623) was also educated at Cambridge—at Trinity College. He took orders, was a Bachelor of Divinity, and was presented to the vicarage of Alderton, in Suffolk, where he died. Fuller quaintly relates that his "clownish and low-parted parishioners (having nothing but their shoes high about them) valued not their pastor according to his worth, which disposed him to melancholy and hastened his dissolution." His best poem is *Christ's Victory and Triumph*. This poem, too, is a production of the school of Spenser; but his stanza is an octave, with two rimes in the first five lines, and one new rime in the last three. There is here and there a sense of heaviness and difficulty—not always successfully overcome—in the concluding triplet. But much of the poem might well have been written by Spenser himself—so rich is the style, so smooth the flow. The following is a stanza:—

The birds sweet notes, to sonnet out their joys,  
 Attempered<sup>1</sup> to the lays angelical;  
 And to the birds the winds attune their noise;  
 And to the winds the waters hoarsely call,  
 And echo back again revoiced all;  
 That the whole valley rung with victory.  
 But now our Lord to rest doth homeward fly:  
 See how the night comes stealing from the mountains high

(i) The rime-scheme is *ababbcc*.

(ii) "Giles has written *Christ's Victory* with such a glow and fire of continuous inspiration, with such splendour of language and imagery,

<sup>1</sup> A verb transitive having as subject "birds" and as object "notes."



and occasionally (indeed, very frequently) with single lines and passages of such force and beauty, that few poems of the kind by any but the very greatest masters can be read with equal pleasure."—*SAINTSBURY*.

(iii) "It constantly reminds us, with allowance for the difference of centuries, of the work of the Rossettis, brother and sister, in its combination of vivid and elaborate pictorial effect with gorgeous word-music."—*Idem.* X

X **II. John Donne** (1573—1631) was born in London, of a Catholic family, his mother having been the daughter of John Heywood and a descendant of Sir Thomas More. He studied both at Oxford and Cambridge, but took no degree. He acted as secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, the Lord High Chancellor; but, in consequence of having made a clandestine marriage with Ann More (niece of Lady Egerton), he was dismissed and sent with two friends who had helped him in his love affairs to the Tower. In a letter to his wife about this time, he concludes with the words "John Donne, Ann Donne, Ondone" (a childish pun in keeping with the habits of the age). In the year 1615 he entered the Church by the express desire of James I., who appointed him his chaplain; and six years afterwards he was made Dean of St. Paul's. His works consist of satires, elegies, and religious and miscellaneous poems. They were not published till four years after his death; but they were handed about in manuscript, eagerly copied, greatly admired, and attracted a good deal of imitation as well as admiration. He is said to have, like Browning, used all the resources of the English language, not to express his thought, but to conceal it. He may be said to stand at the head of the group known as the "metaphysical poets," in whom affectation began to smother the essentially lyrical gift, simple, emotional, and subjective, of the great Elizabethans. The terms of philosophy suit ill the singing voice, yet Donne can write in a love poem such a verse as:—

So must pure lovers' souls descend  
To affections and to faculties,  
Which sense may reach and apprehend,  
Else a great prince in prison lies.

Izaak Walton says of his death:

Our Donne is dead! and we may sighing say,  
We had that man, where language chose to stay  
And show her utmost power.

A few appreciative critics cherish an intense admiration for his poems; and Professor Saintsbury speaks of him as "this very great and very puzzling poet." In some of his love poems there is often to be found "the sunniest and most delicate fancy, along with the truest tenderness and depth of feeling," but in general they are stiff and involved. Pope "translated" four of his Satires into modern language, but he did not improve them. The following lines from one of his *Epicedes and Obsequies* give a good idea of his power:

Language, thou art too narrow and too weak  
To ease us now; great sorrows cannot speak.  
If we could sigh out accents, and weep words,  
Grief wears and lessens, that tears breath affords.<sup>1</sup>  
Sad hearts, the less they seem, the more they are  
—So guiltiest men stand mutest at the bar—  
Not that they know not, feel not their estate,  
But extreme sense hath made them desperate.

\* \* \* \* \*

God took her hence, lest some of us should love  
Her, like that plant,<sup>2</sup> Him and His laws above;  
And, when we tears, He mercy shed in this,  
To raise our minds to Heaven, where now she is;  
Who, if her virtues would have let her stay,  
We had had a saint, have now a holiday.

His reputation was perhaps greater than his poetry: the poet Carew wrote of him as—

A king, who ruled as he thought fit  
The universal monarchy of wit,—

and his style has been described as "a brocaded garb of gorgeous phraseology"; but he will always be best known by some of those detached lines from his *Songs and Sonnets* which once to hear is never to forget. Such are his description of the finding, on reopening his grave, of his mistress's token, which had been buried with him, as:—

Whate'er she meant by it,  
That subtle wreath of hair, which crowns my arm,  
A bracelet of bright hair about the bone:

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, the grief to which tears can afford breath (to complain) soon wears away and decreases.

<sup>2</sup> Either the tree of knowledge of good and evil, or the tree of life (GEN. iii. 3).

or the wish:—

I long to talk with some old lover's ghost,  
Who died before the god of love was born,

or the magnificent passage from the *Anniversaries*:—

Her pure and eloquent blood  
Spoke in her cheeks and so distinctly wrought,  
That one might almost say her body thought.

12. **William Drummond of Hawthornden** (1585—1649) was educated at Edinburgh High School and the then lately founded University of Edinburgh. He spent some time at Bruges in the study of civil law; and here we know, from his own notebooks (still extant), that he also read widely in French, English, and classical poetry. On the death of his father in 1610, and his succession to the paternal estates, he relinquished all idea of the law as a profession, and the rest of his life was spent as a poet and man of letters. In 1613 he published a pastoral elegy on the death of Henry, Prince of Wales, which, as we have seen, called forth the efforts of almost all contemporary poets. The poem was entitled *Tears on the Death of Moeliades*, the assumed name of the Prince, forming an anagram of the words, *Miles a Deo* (soldier of God). Three years later appeared in quarto a volume containing a reprint of the elegy and a collection of madrigals and epigrams; and he says of himself that he was "the first in the Isle that Englished the Madrigal." In 1618 Ben Jonson, who had undertaken a journey to Scotland, visited Drummond at Hawthornden, and remained with him for one or two weeks. This was the occasion of those celebrated notes in which the Scottish poet records the particulars of many conversations with the sturdy "Ben," which profess to give the opinions of the latter on contemporary English poets, together with the host's estimate of his guest. In 1623 he published a volume entitled *Flowers of Sion*, a series of religious poems, singularly open-minded for the theology of his time and country, and bearing traces indeed of the influence of the philosophy of Plato. In 1633 he wrote the verses for the magnificent pageant prepared by the city of Edinburgh for the coronation of Charles I. as King of Scotland; and in the quarrels between that monarch and his

Scotch subjects, Drummond, while preserving an independent attitude, was a strong advocate for peace and conciliation. The execution of the King, of whom he had been a lifelong loyal supporter, is said to have hastened the end of the poet; and he died in the following December (1649), and was buried within the little church of Lasswade, overlooking his residence of Hawthornden. Drummond, like Wyatt and Surrey in England, marks a new era in Scottish poetry, which may be regarded as the Scotch equivalent for the school of Sidney and Spenser. He has been included by Lamb with Marlowe, Drayton, and Cowley as "the sweetest names which carry a perfume in the mention." His verse was largely influenced by Italian models; he translated from Petrarch, Tasso, Marino, and others; and it is noteworthy that in the list of books in his library in 1611, no less than sixty-one are by Italian authors.

## MADRIGAL.

Unhappy light,  
Do not approach to bring the woful day  
When I must bid for aye  
Farewell to her, and live in endless plight.  
Fair moon, with gentle beams  
The sight who never mars,  
Long clear heaven's sable vault; and you bright stars,  
Your golden locks long glass in earth's pure streams;  
Let Phoebus never rise  
To dim your watchful eyes:  
Prolong, alas! prolong my short delight,  
And, if ye can, make an eternal night.

## SONG.

That zephyr every year  
So soon was heard to sigh in forests here,  
It was for her; that wrapt in gowns of green  
Meads were so early seen,  
That in the saddest months oft sung the merles,  
It was for her; for her trees dropt forth pearls.  
That proud and stately courts  
Did envy those our shades, and calm resorts,  
It was for her; and she is gone, O woe!  
Woods cut again do grow,  
Bud doth the rose and daisy, winter done,  
But we, once dead, no more do see the sun.

13. **The Chief Prose Writers.**—While the Elizabethan poets had



been perfecting the language of lyrical verse, and the playwrights creating a drama whose harmonies rival those of the great Greek tragedies of the age of Pericles,<sup>1</sup> the writers of English prose were not idle. From **Hooker** to **Jeremy Taylor** an instrument of expression was slowly perfected, to be thrown aside, as we shall see, at the Restoration, before it had attained its fullest development. In **Bacon** we meet the first writer whose prose is absolutely perfect of its kind. Like Sir Thomas More and many other great English writers, he was a man of affairs as well as an author; and throughout his prose he shows a union of literary power with practical and profound wisdom, and of classic dignity with the homely flavours of familiar phrase. **Sir Thomas Overbury** is the best example of those writers, fashionable in the seventeenth century, who gave their time and thoughts to sketches of *character* and manners. The tendency in such writing is towards antithesis and smartness. Of an "Affectate Traveller" Overbury says: "He disdains things above his reach and preferreth all countries before his own." **Robert Burton** is the author of the famous *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). It took him forty years to complete, and it is an excellent example of the great fondness for quotation that was the mania of the writers and scholars of the century. The *Anatomy* is an "unmatched storehouse of learning," and was the perpetual delight of Dr. Johnson. **John Selden** is famous in English literature more for his conversations than for his writings, most of which were in Latin. His *Table Talk* contains sentences as wise as those of Bacon, and as well and weightily expressed.

14. **Francis Bacon** (1561—1626), Baron Verulam, Viscount St. Albans, was born at York House, in the Strand, London, the residence of his father, Sir Nicholas Bacon, the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal. He early displayed so bright an intellect and so quiet a behaviour that the Queen used to call him her "little lord keeper." In his twelfth year he was sent to Cambridge; in his sixteenth he was admitted to the Society of "Ancients" of Gray's Inn, London; and was afterwards attached to the household of Sir Amyas Paulet, the Queen's Ambassador to France,

<sup>1</sup> Pericles, born about 495 B.C., was a great Athenian statesman and orator, leader of the democratic party in Athens, and a noted patron of art and literature.

where he spent three years. Called to the Bar in 1582, with a seat in the House in 1584, knighted by King James I. in 1603, made Solicitor-General in 1607, he gradually climbed to the highest legal post in the country—that of Lord High Chancellor—in 1618; the same year saw him Baron Verulam, and in January, 1621, he became Viscount St. Albans. His fortunes had now risen to their highest point, and from that point his fall was as sudden and unexpected as his rise had been steady and well-earned. In March, 1621, he was accused of having taken bribes, tried by his peers, found guilty, fined, and removed from office. It was customary in those times for suitors to make presents to the judge who was to try their case; the suitors on both sides sent presents; and sometimes, but not always, the judge decided the case on the side of the heavier purse. Bacon was in money difficulties (his servants were extravagant, and he "kept too great a state"); his assistants seem to have taken bribes; and the unfortunate Chancellor had to confess to twenty-three acts of corruption. "It is my act, my hand, my heart; I beseech your lordships be merciful to a broken reed."

He had allowed and shared in a dishonourable system, and though no case of proved injustice was brought against him, he suffered from the indignation with which such a system was rightly regarded. He was fined £40,000, sentenced to be imprisoned in the Tower during the King's pleasure, and declared incapable of sitting in Parliament, or of holding any office or employment in the State or Commonwealth. Bacon seems himself to have seen, on reflection, the iniquity of the system by which he had unthinkingly profited. "I was," he says, "the justest judge that was in England these fifty years. But it was the justest censure that was in Parliament these two hundred years." His fine was remitted, and he was released from the Tower; but he was none the less ruined, and he died, five years later, on Easter morning, 1626, leaving his "name and memory to men's charitable speeches, and to foreign nations, and the next ages."

15. **His Philosophy.**—At a very early period of his career Bacon became dissatisfied with the older or Aristotelian system of philosophy, and he set about reforming the wisdom of the world in order to promote the well-being of man. He conceived a vast

scheme of philosophy in a work entitled *Instauratio Magna*, or the Great Institution of True Philosophy, and in 1605 appeared the *Advancement of Learning*, which was intended to be the first part of the series included in the foregoing title. This was afterwards further enlarged and developed, and published in Latin in 1623 under the title *De Augmentis Scientiarum*. The *Novum Organum*, or New Instrument, the second part, appeared in 1620, and it is upon this work that Bacon's reputation as a philosopher chiefly rests. Some other portions were written or outlined, but his *Instauratio Magna* was never completed, for the scheme was too vast for any one man to perfect on the lines conceived by Bacon.

The whole of his philosophy was a reversal of the deductive method so long pursued. Bacon insists upon observation and experiment; conclusions were to be reached by a process of induction, and by a careful and necessary method of selecting and arranging the results of the observation of phenomena. His system was to include not only the field of external nature, but also the world of morals and the domain of politics as well. His great service to mankind lies in the direction in which he turned human thought in the search for knowledge; and to the lines which he laid down for its pursuit, but little has been added since his own day. The true philosopher during all the antecedent centuries had been satisfied with truth in its abstract form; but Bacon aimed at directing inquiry towards practical ends, and to the enrichment of human life. The School-men, or philosophers of the Middle Ages, wasted their energies in vain dialectics, the elaboration of syllogisms, and endless quibbles over words, and had long been the object of satire by poets and wits. Mediaeval philosophy, too, was inseparably connected with theology, and the use made of it was chiefly to support the doctrines and dogmas of the Church. But the Renaissance movement, or New Learning, asserted its independence, and carried the study of philosophy into a secular atmosphere; and when freed from the trammels which theology had long put upon it, it pursued its own way, and was carried by Bacon into vast fields of discovery not undreamt of, but hitherto unknown. It must not be denied that there were as great and as subtle intellects in the ancient and mediaeval world as in the more modern

times; but the advance made since Bacon's time in the application of human knowledge to human wants, and in scientific discoveries, has been greater than in all previous ages. This has been due to the systematised method of investigation formulated by Bacon, and to its universal powers of application. He combined, in an exceedingly rare degree, deep speculative power with a keen interest for practical ends, and was fired by an enthusiasm which all the fitful change of a varied and eventful life never damped nor quenched.

16. **His Essays.**—In the field of pure literature Bacon stands in the front rank amongst the immortal writers of essays. "Fragments of my conceits," he calls them, and these numbered ten in the original edition published in 1597. In this form of prose he follows the example of the French writer Montaigne, whose *Essays* were translated into English by Florio, and published in 1603. In the second edition of his own *Essays*, published in 1612, Bacon increased the number to thirty-eight; and in 1625 they appeared in their final form, numbering fifty-eight. Bacon thought little of his works in their English form, as was not unusual in great writers of the time, and his first care was to have them translated into Latin, which was still the universal language of the learned. The essays are a collection of thoughts and observations set down from time to time, and carefully and elaborately polished at leisure. The style is pressed, compact, clear, and weighty, yet remarkably imaginative and full of comparisons, similes, tropes, and other figures of rhetoric. The *Essays* cover a wide and varied field, and are saturated with condensed wisdom. It is difficult, if not impossible, to appreciate their full significance, or to grasp their full import in one reading. They may with the greatest profit be read again and again, and there is nothing in English literature better repays a careful study than these "fragments." They are no mere out-pouring of a rapid pen; they are rather the product of long and profound reflection. There is hardly a superfluous word in them; they are terseness itself, and luminous with thought. They are not analytical, nor discursive, nor argumentative; they are more in the nature of authoritative verdicts, showing a mind that ever preserved a perfect balance, and expresses its judgments



in clear and lucid language. Bacon discovers and seizes a truth, and clothes it in perfect form and imagery. He is never led aside by vain issues; he is never the subject of a delusion; his instinct for truth is unerring, and his sanity perfect.

In addition to the *Essays* and philosophical works, he also wrote *The New Atlantis*, an unfinished book on an ideal community whose pursuit was light or knowledge, after the manner of More's *Utopia*. He also wrote the *History of Henry VII.*, a model of a work, considering the age in which it was written, when historians got no further than merely to chronicle events. The following passage illustrates the style of the *Essays*:—

#### OF STUDIES.

Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. And, therefore, if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit; and if he read little, he had need have much cunning to seem to know that he doth not. Histories make men wise; poets witty; the mathematics subtle; natural philosophy deep; moral grave; logic and rhetoric able to contend.

(i) Bacon was highly appreciated by his contemporaries. Raleigh mentions him as eminent both as a speaker and a writer.

(ii) Ben Jonson in his *Sylva; or, Discourses*, which contains the raw material for an essay on the prose style of the seventeenth century, says of Bacon that he "hath filled up all numbers, and performed that in our tongue, which may be compared or preferred either to insolent Greece or haughty Rome," and that "he may be named and stand as the mark and ἀκμή of our language."

(iii) Francis Bacon is frequently called *Lord Bacon*, but this is an error. If his title of "Lord" is used at all, it should be in company with the names that were given with that title—Verulam or St. Albans.

17. Sir Thomas Overbury (1581—1613) is a good example of the seventeenth-century writers of "Characters." He was born at Ilmington, in Warwickshire, the son of a squire of that county; educated at Queen's College, Oxford; and socially polished by a long tour on the Continent. Robert Carr, the favourite of James I., introduced him to the court, and he was knighted in 1608. When Carr was made Viscount Rochester in 1611, he was eager to marry the Countess of Essex, then aged nineteen, who had been married in 1606 at the age of thirteen to the Earl of Essex, then in his fifteenth year. Overbury steadfastly opposed the proceedings for a divorce, which was sought for by the Countess to enable her to

marry Carr. It was feared that his influence might frustrate her designs, and, to get him out of the way, the King was induced by Carr to offer him an embassy to Russia, which he declined. Lady Essex persuaded Lord Rochester to exert himself with the King to have Overbury thrown into the Tower, where he was poisoned, at the age of thirty-two, by a creature of the abandoned pair. His "Characters" are more full of wit than of humour. The style is curt and epigrammatic; and there is frequently a feeling of strain. He says of a "Good Woman": "Dishonesty never comes nearer than her ears, and then wonder stops it out, and saves virtue the labour. . . . She hath a content of her own, and so seeks not an husband, but finds him." Of the "English Franklin, or Yeoman," he writes:—

His outside is an ancient yeoman of England, though his inside may give arms with the best gentlemen and never see the herald. There is no truer servant in the house than himself. Though he be master, he says not to his servants, "Go to field," but "Let us go"; and with his own eye doth both fatten his flock, and set forward all manner of husbandry. He is taught by nature to be contented with a little; his own fold yields him both food and raiment; he is pleased with any nourishment God sends, whilst curious gluttony ransacks, as it were, Noah's ark for food only to feed the riot of one meal. He is never known to go to law; understanding to be law-bound among men is like to be hide-bound among his beasts; they thrive not under it; and that such men sleep as unquietly as if their pillows were stuffed with lawyers' pen-knives. . . . He allows of honest pastime, and thinks not the bones of the dead anything bruised or the worse for it, though the country lasses dance in the churchyard after evensong. Rock Monday, and the wake in Summer, Shrotings, the wakeful catches on Christmas Eve, the hockey or seed-cake, these he yearly keeps, yet holds them no relics of popery.

18. **Robert Burton** (1577—1640) was the author of a book that has been famous in England for centuries—the *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Dr. Johnson said of it that it was the only book that ever drew him out of bed two hours sooner than he wished to rise. Burton was born at Lindley, in Leicestershire, and

educated at Brasenose College, Oxford, which he entered as a commoner in 1593. In 1599 he was elected student of Christ Church. Taking orders, he was presented with two livings, which he continued to hold, says Anthony à Wood, the Oxford antiquary, "with much ado, to his dying day," though he resided for fifty years at Christ Church. His book is a wonderful collection of quotations from writers of every age—more especially from Greek and Latin, from mediaeval scholars, from writers of the Renaissance, from the rarest and most out-of-the-way authors—whose names are known only to savants, and whose books few have ever seen—from contemporary poets and prose authors. A clergyman and a university recluse, he read for thirty years; he seems to have read almost everything in literature, in science, in law, in theology. The first edition of his book appeared in 1621 (it took him more than twenty years to write); and he spent twenty more in reconstructing, polishing, and perfecting the work, leaving, says the editor of the edition of 1651, "a copy of it exactly corrected, with several considerable additions by his own hand." He possessed an inexhaustible and overflowing memory, and his head was a living encyclopaedia of all knowledge. In his great book he plays many parts—an ecclesiastic, a humorist, a puritan, a poet, an eccentric, a madman. His book has been for generations "an unmatched storehouse of learning," and a quarry to which scholars have for ages gone to find the most apposite and telling expression of a thought. He is constantly digressing, and his sentences are too long and often a little clumsy. But he is the best example in our literature of the seventeenth-century learning, and no contemporary shows so great a proof of omnivorous reading.

(i) "He is never-ending; words, phrases, overflow, are heaped up, overlap each over, and flow on, carrying the reader along, deafened, stunned, half-drowned, unable to touch ground in the deluge."—Taine.

(ii) Burton quotes and refers to such writers as Benzo, Lelius, Bredenbachius, Dublinius, Bellonius, of whom modern readers know nothing.

19. **John Selden** (1584—1654), a great lawyer and a thoughtful statesman, is, like Dr. Johnson, very much better known by his talk than by his writings. He was born at Salvington, in Sussex; educated

at Hart Hall, Oxford; and, in 1604, entered of the Inner Temple, where he quickly gained a name for his great learning. In 1624 he entered Parliament as member for Lancaster, and supported Hampden in his resistance to the royal claim for ship-money. He never became a party man, but always voted according to the merits of the question under discussion. Lord Clarendon said of him that he "had the best faculty in making hard things easy, and presenting them to the understanding, of any man that hath been known." This was because he looked with his own eyes, went straight to the heart of a subject, and did not give more than their true value to details. Among other things he says: "No man is the wiser for his learning; it may administer matter to work in, or objects to work upon; but wit and wisdom are born with a man." And again: "We measure the excellency of other men by some excellency we conceive to be in ourselves. Nash, a poet, poor enough (as poets us'd to be), seeing an alderman with his gold chain upon his great horse, by way of scorn said to one of his companions, 'Do you see yon fellow, how goodly, how big he looks? Why, that fellow cannot make a blank verse.' Nay, we measure the goodness of God from ourselves; we measure his goodness, his justice, his wisdom, by something we call just, good, or wise in ourselves; and in so doing we judge proportionately to the country fellow in the play, who said if he were a King he would live like a Lord, and have peas and bacon every day, and a whip that cry'd Slash."

The only book of Selden's now read is his *Table Talk*, which was collected and written down by his secretary, but not published till 1689, about thirty-five years after his death.

20. **James I.** was himself an author, both in poetry and prose. In the former he published, in 1585, the *Essayes of a Prentise in the Divine Art of Poesie*, consisting of twelve sonnets of invocation to the gods, a tragedy, and some translations; in the latter a *Daemonologie* and the *Basilikon Doron*<sup>1</sup> (1599), and *A Counterblaste to Tobacco*, published in London in 1604. His Majesty in vain attempted to discredit this "vile custome of Tobacco taking," then

<sup>1</sup> *Basilikon Doron* (Kingly Gift), a work on the Divine right of kings dedicated by James to his son and successor, Charles I.



a novelty in England. The style is not wanting in vigour, as will appear from the following peroration: "Have you not reason then to be ashamed, and to forbear this filthy novelty, so basely grounded, so foolishly received, and so grossly mistaken in the right use thereof? In your abuse thereof sinning against God, harming yourselves both in person and goods, and taking also thereby the marks and notes of vanity upon you: by the custom thereof making yourselves to be wondered at by all foreign civil nations, and by all strangers that come among you to be scorned and contemned. A custom loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, dangerous to the lungs, and in the black stinking fume thereof, nearest resembling the horrible Stygian smoke of the pit that is bottomless."

21. **William Drummond of Hawthornden** (p. 176) was no less eminent as a prose writer than as a poet. Besides what we may term the "Table Talk" of Ben Jonson, already referred to, he contributed under the title of *A Character of Several Authors* some acute criticism of his English contemporaries. He wrote also many political tracts, and a *History of Scotland* from 1423 to 1542. His greatest prose work is *The Cypress Grove*, a treatise on Death, no less remarkable for deep philosophical thought than for "its harmonious and ornate" style. From it we quote the following: "If on the great theatre of this earth, amongst the numberless number of men, to die were only proper to thee and thine, then undoubtedly thou hadst reason to grudge at so severe and partial a law. But since it is a necessity, from the which never an age by-past hath been exempted, and unto which they which be, and so many as are to come, are thrall'd (no consequent of life being more common and familiar), why shouldst thou, with unprofitable and nothing availing stubbornness, oppose to so inevitable and necessary a condition? This is the highway of mortality, our general home: behold what millions have trod it before thee, what multitudes shall after thee, with them which at that same instant run!"

22. **Lord Herbert of Cherbury** (1581—1648), the elder brother of George Herbert, was a conspicuous figure in the social and political circles of his time. He served in the Continental wars, and

was ambassador at Paris (1619-24), but towards the close of his life he joined the Parliamentary party. He was a deist, and wrote while in France his best work, *De Veritate*, an exposition of his deistic philosophy. He also wrote a *Life of Henry VIII.*, a fine example of dignified and manly prose; but he is chiefly known for his *Autobiography*, first published by Horace Walpole in 1764. It is interesting for its personal details and references to contemporary events, but is marked by vanity and egotism, and lacks any special qualities of style. believer  
but not  
revealer

23. **Richard Knolles** (1550-1610).—The longest prose work of the Jacobean period is the little-known *History of the Turks*, a folio of more than 1,300 pages, by Richard Knolles. Born at Cold Ashby, in Northamptonshire, about 1550, he graduated at Oxford in 1564, obtained a fellowship at Lincoln College, and finally became head-master of Sandwich Grammar School. His *History* excited the admiration of Dr. Johnson, who, in a paper in *The Rambler*, says: "None of our writers can, in my opinion, contest the superiority of Knolles, who, in his *History of the Turks*, has displayed all the excellences that narration can admit." Byron also mentions him in *Don Juan*, and elsewhere refers to the *History* as "one of the first books that gave me pleasure when a child"; and Hazlitt says of his style: "His descriptions are vivid and animated; circumstantial, but not to feebleness."

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE CAROLINE POETS.

1. **Introductory.**—The chief poets of the two Caroline reigns are Robert Herrick, who is one of the very finest lyrists that our language can show, "the first in rank and station of English song-writers"; Francis Quarles, a writer of religious and proverbial verse; George Herbert, a religious poet with an exquisite and pure English style; Thomas Carew, a lyrist not only of intense passion but of "consummate elegance"; Edmund Waller, a writer of verse—and sometimes of poetry—who took infinite pains with his work; Sir William D'Avenant, who is best known as a friend of Milton's; John Milton, himself, the greatest epic poet that England has produced; Sir John Suckling, the author of some charming poems and ballads; Richard Crashaw, a religious poet, whose best is something supremely beautiful; Sir John Denham, who is generally spoken of as one of the "reformers of our numbers"; Abraham Cowley, a writer of Pindaric odes, who was by far the most popular poet of the seventeenth century; Colonel Lovelace, who wrote some of the finest poetical addresses in the most harmonious measures; and Henry Vaughan, the "Silurist," a religious poet with a depth of feeling and strength of passion above that of Herbert, or even of Crashaw.

(i) Herbert, Vaughan, Crashaw, and Quarles are generally classified as Religious Poets.

(ii) Herrick stands in a class by himself.

(iii) Carew (pronounced Cary), Lovelace, and Suckling are known as the Cavalier Poets, because they sang of the goodness of the Royalist cause and "the greatness of their King."

(iv) Waller and Denham are known as the "scholarly poets."

2. **Robert Herrick** (1591—1634) was born in Cheapside, in the City of London, where his father was a wealthy goldsmith. He

was left an orphan in his second year by the sudden death of his father. In 1614 he was entered as a fellow-commoner at St. John's College, Cambridge; and, after leaving college, was presented, in 1629, by Charles I. to the vicarage of Dean Prior, in Devonshire, on the skirts of rugged Dartmoor. He remained at college for an unusually long time; seems, indeed, to have been thirty-eight before he left Cambridge. At Dean Prior he lived for about twenty years; and here he wrote his *Noble Numbers* and *Hesperides*, which were published together in the year 1648—the year before Charles I. was executed. Though he was genuinely fond of the country and of country life, he contrived to visit London frequently, and to meet Ben Jonson at those “lyric feasts made at the Sun, the Dog, or Triple Tun.” He was one of “the sons of Ben Jonson, and sealed of the tribe of Ben.” Herrick ever yearned for London and the society he found there, but he loved flowers and streams also, and sang of them as few poets have ever done. In 1647 he was ejected from his living—became one of “the deprived clergy,” shook the dust of “loathed Devonshire” from his feet, and went gladly to his old haunts in London, to Cheapside, Fleet Street, and the Strand. Herrick was restored to his living in 1662—two years after the Restoration, and there he spent the last twelve years of his life. He died in 1674 at Dean Prior, at the age of eighty-three.

In the *Hesperides*,<sup>1</sup> or *Works both Human and Divine*, he sings of almost every side of country life. He says:—

I sing of brooks, of blossoms, birds, and bowers,  
Of April, May, of June, and July-flowers;  
I sing of May-poles, hock-carts,<sup>2</sup> wassails,<sup>3</sup> wakes,  
Of bridegrooms, brides, and of their bridal-cakes.  
I sing of times trans-shifting; and I write  
How roses first came red, and lilies white.  
I write of groves, of twilight, and I sing  
The court of Mab, and of the Fairy King.

<sup>1</sup> *Hesperides* = in Greek mythology the maidens who guarded the golden apples, which were a gift from the earth to Hera, wife of Zeus. The garden in which these grew was supposed to be in the extreme west; hence *Hesperides* = fruits from the West—i.e., Devonshire.

<sup>2</sup> Hock-cart—the last cart from the harvest-field.

<sup>3</sup> Wassails—drinking festivals of Christmas and New Year, when pledging of health was indulged in. From Saxon *waes hael* = be hale.



It is almost impossible to exaggerate the beauty and grace of his lyrics. Among the finest are *To Daffodils*, *The Mad Maid's Song*, and *Corinna's Going A-Maying*.

TO DAFFODILS.

Fair Daffodils, we weep to see  
 You haste away so soon :  
 As yet the early-rising Sun  
 Has not attain'd his noon.  
     Stay, stay,  
 Until the hasting day  
     Has run  
 But to the even-song ;  
 And, having pray'd together, we  
 Will go with you along.  
 We have short time to stay, as you,  
 We have as short a Spring ;  
 As quick a growth to meet decay  
 As you, or any thing.  
     We die,  
 As your hours do, and dry  
     Away  
 Like to the Summer's rain ;  
 Or as the pearls of morning's dew  
 Ne'er to be found again.

Rise ; and put on your foliage, and be seen  
 To come forth, like the Spring time, fresh and green,  
 And sweet as Flora. Take no care  
 For jewels for your gown, or hair :  
 Fear not ; the leaves will strew  
 Gems in abundance upon you :  
 Besides, the childhood of the day has kept,  
 Against you come, some orient pearls unwept :  
 Come, and receive them while the light  
 Hangs on the dew-locks of the night :  
 And Titan on the eastern hill  
 Retires himself, or else stands still  
 Till you come forth. Wash, dress, be brief in praying :  
 Few beads are best, when once we go a-Maying.

From *Corinna's Going A-Maying*.

But it is impossible even to glance at his poems anywhere without lighting on exquisite lines or verses of pre-eminent beauty. Speaking of Blossoms, he writes :—

What ! were ye born to be  
 An hour or half's delight,  
 And so to bid good-night ?

'Twas pity Nature brought ye forth  
Merely to show your worth,  
And lose you quite.

His book is, among so many other things, crowded with epigrams, most of them of the neatest turn. Thus he tells us to be thrifty, but not anxious :—

*Quintus* || Live with a thrifty, not a needy, fate;  
Small shots paid often waste a vast estate.

He defines "Love, what it is" :—

Love is a circle that doth restless move  
In the same sweet eternity of love.

"Four things make us happy here"; and these are :—

*Reveries* || Health is the first good lent to men;  
A gentle disposition then;  
Next, to be rich by no byways;  
Lastly, with friends, t' enjoy our days.

Of kings he says :—

Kings must be dauntless : subjects will contemn  
Those who want hearts, and wear a diadem.

In his *Noble Numbers*, which he also calls *Pious Pieces*, he gives us his religious poems. These are not written with so much fervour and enjoyment as his secular verses, but they contain many beautiful lines. Of God he writes :—

God is above the sphere of our esteem  
And is the best known, not defining Him.

Here and there we come upon a triplet of the most exquisite beauty :—

We see Him come, and know Him ours,  
Who with His sunshine and His showers  
Turns all the patient ground to flowers.

And he closes the book with the couplet :—

Of all the good things, whatsoe'er we do,  
God is the Archè and the Telos too.<sup>1</sup>

Swinburne says of him : "As a creative and inventive singer, he surpasses all his rivals in quantity of good work ; in quality of spontaneous instinct and melodious inspiration he reminds us, by frequent and flawless evidence, who above all others must beyond all doubt have been his first master and his first model in lyric poetry—the author of *The Passionate Shepherd to his Love*."

<sup>1</sup> Archè = beginning ; Telos = end.

3. **Francis Quarles** (1592—1644), chronologer—that is, official historian—to the City of London, was the author of a very large number of verses and poems, but is now remembered in poetry only by his *Emblems*. These were a number of short poems, written on texts of scripture, to illustrate a series of allegorical designs, each accompanied by quotations from the Fathers, and followed by an epigram. They have the stiffness natural to all poetry written to order. Much of his writing looks like college exercises, but some passages are not without merit.

The following stanzas from the *Emblems* show Quarles at his best. Of them Archbishop Trench has said that they have shown him “that his admirers, though they may have admired a good deal too much, had far better right than his despisers.”

False world, thou liest ; thou canst not lend  
 The least delight :  
 Thy favours cannot gain a friend,  
 They are so slight :  
 Thy morning pleasures make an end  
 To please at night :  
 Poor are the wants that thou suppliest :  
 And yet thou vaunt'st, and yet thou viest<sup>1</sup>  
 With heaven ; fond earth, thou boast'st ; false world, thou liest.

What well-advised ear regards  
 What earth can say ?  
 Thy words are gold, but thy rewards  
 Are painted clay :  
 Thy cunning can but pack the cards  
 Thou canst not play :  
 Thy game at weakest, still thou viest ;  
 If seen, and then revied, deniest ;  
 Thou art not what thou seem'st ; false world, thou liest.

4. **George Herbert** (1593—1633) was born at Montgomery Castle in Wales, where his family, who were of Norman-Welsh origin, had long lived. His elder brother was the famous Lord Herbert of Cherbury. As a child, Walton tells us “he seemed to be marked out for piety, and to become the care of Heaven, and of a particular good angel to guide and guard him.” He was educated at Westminster School and at Cambridge, where he became Fellow

<sup>1</sup> To *vie* is to stake a sum upon a card ; to *revie* for another player to cover this with a larger stake.

of Trinity in 1615, and Public Orator four years later. At this time he was only twenty-six. Sir Henry Wotton and Dr. Donne called him friend; and Bacon consulted him on literary subjects. As a courtier, he was a personal favourite of King James; but a great change of mind seems to have come over him on the accession of Charles I., and he went into holy orders. He ended his days as Rector of Bemerton, one mile from Salisbury, in Wiltshire, at the early age of thirty-nine. His poems have been compared to Keble's, both being intimately related to an Anglican revival. It is noteworthy, in this connection, that the popularity which they enjoyed during the seventeenth century has been revived during the nineteenth. His volume of poems is called *The Temple*; and it is full of beautiful thoughts and noble lines, though disfigured by conceits, such as poems shaped as wings, etc. The book is introduced by *The Church Porch*—a collection of apophthegms put into the neatest and clearest English.

In brief, acquit thee bravely; play the man.  
 Look not on pleasures as they come, but go.  
 Defer not the least virtue: life's poor span  
 Make not an ell, by trifling in thy woe.  
 If thou do ill, the joy fades, not the pains:  
 If well, the pain doth fade, the joy remains.

The other poems are dictated by, and written on, the moods of a religious mind—its fears and hopes, its depressions and exaltations. With Herbert, they were most frequently depressions; for he suffered greatly from ague, and often lay all night racked with pain and unable to gain a minute's sleep. In his poem called *The Flower* he says:—

And now in age I bud again,  
 After so many deaths I live and write;  
 I once more smell the dew and rain,  
 And relish versing: O my only Light,  
     It cannot be  
     That I am he,  
 On whom thy tempests fell all night.

He says "in age": he was barely thirty-six when this was written. Herbert is remarkable everywhere for the purity and simplicity of his English; and this is visible in the homely phrase "relish versing."



His poems—*The Temple: Sacred Poems, etc.*—were not published till after his death. The titles of many of them are very odd: *Artillery*; *The Bunch of Grapes*; *Church Lock and Key*; *The Collar*; *Easter-Wings* (verses written within the outlines of two wings); *The Holdfast*; *The Pulley*; *The Temper*; and so on. He uses all kinds of metrical forms; but the foot he employs is invariably the iambus. He ends a sonnet on *Prayer* with the lines:—

Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,  
The land of spices; something understood.

The curious poem called *The Temper* has this quatrain:—

Whether I fly with angels, fall with dust,  
Thy hands made both, and I am there.  
Thy power and love, my love and trust,  
Make one place everywhere.

Herbert was devotedly fond of music; and when on his death-bed, he called for his lute and sang to it his own poem called *Sunday*. This is the last verse:—

Thou art a day of mirth:  
And where the week-days trail or ground,  
Thy flight is higher, as thy birth:  
O let me take thee at the bound,  
Leaping with thee from seven to seven  
Till that we both, being toss'd from earth,  
Fly hand in hand to heaven!

In his poem *The Glance*, he speaks of the pure soul standing face to face with God:—

What wonders shall we feel, when we shall see  
Thy full-eyed love!  
When thou shalt look us out of pain!

The last line is a fine instance of Herbert's strong simplicity. The same quality is visible in the lines in which he contrasts the régime of the world with that of God:—

Thine clad with simpleness and sad events.

*The Temple* was edited by Nicholas Ferrar—a remarkable man who retired from the world with his wife and children and a few followers, and founded a religious society (which still exists) at Little Gidding, in Huntingdonshire.<sup>1</sup> The two good men sympathised deeply and

<sup>1</sup> The modern novel of *John Inglesant* contains an account of this society.

strongly with each other, especially in such poems as *Love* ("Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back"), *The Pulley*, *On Kindness*, and others. We may say of Herbert himself what he says of Man: "He was a garden in a Paradise."

(i) "George Herbert is a true poet, but a poet *sui generis*, the merits of whose poems will never be felt without a sympathy with the mind and character of the man."—S. T. COLERIDGE.

(ii) "To become part of a great and Divine Order, to regulate his life by rules, to perform a round of duties exactly, reverently, gracefully, gladly, and at the same time to express in song the tides, the fluctuations, the incursions, the ebb and flow of the spirit, made up the life of George Herbert."—PROFESSOR DOWDEN.

5. **Thomas Carew** (1598—1640), a younger son of Sir Matthew Carew, Master of Chancery, was educated at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, but fell into dissipated habits, and left without taking a degree. He served abroad as secretary to the British Embassy at Turin and elsewhere, and afterwards became sewer<sup>1</sup> in ordinary to Charles I., and gentleman of his privy chamber. As a poet, he takes a foremost place amongst the Royalist lyrists of his time, and is the author of the fine stanzas:—

Ask me no more where Jove bestows,  
When June is past, the fading rose;  
For in your beauty's orient deep,  
These flowers, as in their causes, sleep.

Ask me no more, whither do stray  
The golden atoms of the day;  
For, in pure love, heaven did prepare  
These powders to enrich your hair.

Ask me no more whither doth haste  
The nightingale, when May is past;  
For in your sweet dividing throat  
She winters, and keeps warm her note.

Carew is a connecting link between the great song-writers of the Elizabethan age and those of the Restoration; and in the short poem *Disdain Returned*, he rises to the height of the best Elizabethan thought and expression. The following verses are well known:—

<sup>1</sup> cup-bearer.

He that loves a rosy cheek,  
 Or a coral lip admires,  
 Or from star-like eyes doth seek  
 Fuel to maintain his fires,  
 As old Time makes these decay,  
 So his flames must waste away.  
 But a smooth and steadfast mind,  
 Gentle thoughts and calm desires,  
 Hearts with equal love combined,  
 Kindle never-dying fires.  
 Where thou art not, I despise  
 Lovely cheeks, or lips, or eyes.

He also wrote a splendid elegy on Donne, summing up with :—

Here lies a king, who ruled as he thought fit  
 The universal monarchy of wit.

6. **Edmund Waller** (1606—1687), cousin to the patriot John Hampden, was educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge, and seems to have obtained a seat in Parliament at the early age of seventeen. When the Civil War broke out, he took the side of the King, and is said to have sent to Charles I. a thousand broad pieces when he raised his standard at Nottingham. In 1643 he was arrested for complicity in a plot against the Parliament, thrown into prison, and barely escaped with his life; but "upon further consideration" he was fined £10,000 and allowed to retire to France. After some years' absence, he returned to England, received his pardon under the Great Seal, and made his peace with Cromwell, by writing a vigorous panegyric on his virtues. This was followed up by an elegy on the Protector at his death; but it was soon succeeded at the Restoration by a congratulatory address to the new monarch. Charles II. remarked that the new copy of verses was inferior to the first, and called Waller's attention to this. "Ah, sire," was the reply, "you know that we poets never succeed so well in writing truth as in fiction." He sat in successive Parliaments for the remainder of his life, was made Provost of Eton, and died at Beaconsfield, in Buckinghamshire (afterwards the seat of Edmund Burke and of Benjamin Disraeli), at the advanced age of eighty-one. Such fame as he has rests chiefly on his minor poems and on the correctness and clearness of his verse. His special significance in this is his

adoption of the heroic metre, not as it had been used by Chaucer or by the Elizabethan writers, but in that perfectly chiselled form of the classic verse which kept its hold in English literature for the next century and a half. He was styled by a contemporary verse-writer a

Maker and model of melodious verse ;

and, in his own generation, he was regarded as second only to Cowley. Perhaps his best known poem is *The Message of the Rose*. It was addressed to the Lady Dorothy Sidney, the eldest daughter of Lord Leicester, to whom he made love under the uneuphonious name of Sacharissa :—

Go, lovely Rose !  
Tell her that wastes her time and me  
That now she knows,  
When I resemble her to thee  
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

Tell her that's young,  
And shuns to have her graces spied,  
That had'st thou sprung  
In deserts, where no men abide,  
Thou must have uncommended died.

But he is capable of more serious and higher work than this. Writing of Old Age, he says :—

The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,  
Lets in new light through chinks that time has made ;  
Stronger by weakness, wiser men become,  
As they draw near to their eternal home.  
Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view,  
That stand upon the threshold of the new.

(i) "Waller's muse always presents herself in irreproachable condition, not a curl out of place, not a spot or crease on her dress, the colours chosen with sufficient taste, the arrangement made with sufficient skill."—  
SAINTSBURY.

(ii) "He balances his thoughts, as he does his syllables, and in him first we detect that see-saw of phraseology, now up, now down, which was to become the crowning sin of the classic poetry."—EDMUND GOSSE.

7. **Sir William D'Avenant**, or **Davenant** (1606—1668), the son of an innkeeper or vintner, was born at Oxford, and served as page in the household of the Countess of Richmond, whose service he left for that of Lord Brooke. He had written several plays prior



to the closing of the theatres by the Puritan party, and during the war he took the side of the Royalists, served under the Earl of Newcastle, and was knighted for valour.\* On the decline of the Royal cause he resided for some time in Paris, where he commenced his poem *Gondibert*. In 1650 he sailed for Virginia, but on the way out a Parliamentary man-of-war captured his vessel and him, and brought him to Cowes, where he was thrown into prison. His life was in danger, but Milton interceded for him with success; and, later on, when the tide of affairs had turned, D'Avenant rendered the same service to Milton. He succeeded Ben Jonson as Poet Laureate, and resumed that office under Charles II. at the Restoration. His chief poem, *Gondibert*, is a long and wearisome epic of 60,000 lines, and even then incomplete; it is written in quatrains of iambic pentameters, like those employed by Sir John Davies in *Nosce Teipsum*, by Dryden in the *Annus Mirabilis*, and by Gray in his *Elegy*:—

It (sleep) loves the cottage and from court abstains,  
It stills the seaman though the storm be high,  
Frees the grieved captive in his closest chains,  
Stops Want's loud mouth, and blinds the treacherous spy.

It will be seen that Davenant's epithets, such as *closest*, *loud*, and *treacherous* are of the most commonplace order; and the poem, though highly commended by Cowley, Waller, and Hobbes, gradually fell into neglect, and is now forgotten.

8. **Sir John Suckling** (1609—1641) was the son of the Comptroller of the Royal Household of James I. His father died in 1627, while the son was at Trinity College, Cambridge; and young Suckling, only eighteen, found himself in possession of a large fortune. He at once set out on his travels, wandered through France, Germany, Italy, and Spain for four years, seeking adventures and now and then finding them. He had the charge of a troop in the army commanded by the Marquis of Hamilton under Gustavus Adolphus in the continental wars. On his return to England he became a prominent member of the Court, and raised, equipped, and maintained at his own expense a troop of horse, which he presented to the King for use against the Scots Covenanters in 1639; but, when Suckling's men came

in sight of the grim Scotsmen at Dunse, near Berwick, they turned tail and fled. Later on, he was concerned in a plot to enable Strafford to escape from the Tower; the plot was discovered, and Suckling fled to France. He died in Paris, some say by poison, but the facts are not rightly known. He is one of the best writers of occasional poetry in the language, but his verse, taken as a whole, is of very unequal merit. His best known poem is the extremely charming *Ballad on a Wedding*. Of the bride he says, in lines similar to Herrick's *Upon Mistress Susanna Southwell*:—

Her feet beneath her petticoat,  
Like little mice, stole in and out,  
As if they feared the light :  
But O ! she dances such a way !  
No sun upon an Easter-day  
Is half so fine a sight.

His style was generally spoken of as "natural and easy." But, indeed, he now and then catches the fine freedom and the noble numbers of the Elizabethan lyrists. Here is a part of one of his songs :—

I prithee, send me back my heart,  
Since I cannot have thine :  
For if from yours you will not part,  
Why then shouldst thou have mine?  
Yet now I think on't—let it lie !  
To find it were in vain :  
For th' hast a thief in either eye  
Would steal it back again.

The lyrics, "Why so pale and wan, fond lover?" and "Out upon it, I have loved," have been well known for the last two hundred years. The *Lute Song*:—

Hast thou seen the down in the air,  
When wanton blasts have tossed it?

is a direct imitation of Ben Jonson's :—

Have you seen but a bright lily grow  
Before rude hands have touched it?  
Have you marked but the fall of the snow  
Before the soil hath smutched it?

(i) "His *Ballad on a Wedding* is perfect in its kind, and has a spirit of high enjoyment in it, of sportive fancy, a liveliness of description, and a truth of nature that never were surpassed."—HAZLITT.

(ii) "Everything with Suckling runs to a ripple of merriment."—SAINTSBURY.

9. **Richard Lovelace** (1618—1658).—Though Colonel Lovelace was a younger man, he may well be coupled with Suckling as one of two “Cavalier poets.” Both were Royalist gentlemen, and showed their easy grace and fine manners in their verses as in their lives. Richard Lovelace was the son of Sir William Lovelace, Knight, and was born at Woolwich. A contemporary describes him at the age of sixteen as “the most amiable and beautiful person that eye ever beheld.” He was asked by his county—Kent—to present a petition to the House of Commons (the Long Parliament at that time) praying that the King might be restored to his rights. His petition was burnt by the hands of the common hangman, and he himself thrown into prison; he was liberated, however, on heavy bail, went to France, joined the French army, and was wounded at the siege of Dunkirk. He spent his whole fortune in support of the King’s cause—and in vain. Want and misery threw him into a consumption; and he died (1658) in a cellar in Gunpowder Alley—a wretched slum near Shoe Lane, in London. His volume of poems was called *Lucasta*,<sup>1</sup> and appeared in 1649—the year of the King’s execution. A complete edition of all his poems was brought out by his brother in 1659—the year after the death of the poet. His two best poems are *To Althea, from Prison*, and *To Lucasta, on Going to the Wars*. Perhaps the last is the most perfect poem he ever wrote, and it is one of the most perfect in our literature; but both “snatch a grace beyond the reach of art” :—

Tell me not, sweet, I am unkind  
That from the nunnery  
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind,  
To war and arms I fly.

True, a new mistress now I chase,  
The first foe in the field;  
And with a stronger faith embrace  
A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such  
As you, too, shall adore;  
I could not love thee, dear, so much,  
Loved I not honour more.

<sup>1</sup> *Lucasta* = Lux casta (chaste light); and *Lux* = Lucy (Sacheverell), with whom he was in love.

The last verse of *To Althea, from Prison* is well known:—

Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage;  
Minds innocent and quiet take  
That for an hermitage:  
If I have freedom in my love,  
And in my soul am free,  
Angels alone, that soar above,  
Enjoy such liberty.

"A tone of chivalrous gentleness and honour gives to some of Lovelace's poems a pathos beyond the reach of any mere poetic art."—  
CRAIK.

10. **Richard Crashaw** (1612—1650) must be classed with Herbert and Vaughan as one of the finest and sweetest religious poets of the seventeenth century. Son of the Vicar of Whitechapel, he was born in London, educated at Charterhouse, and passed to Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, in 1631. In 1637 he was elected a Fellow of Peterhouse. At Cambridge he spent his time "like a primitive saint, offering more prayers by night than others usually offer in the day." He was deprived of his fellowship in 1649 for refusing to sign the Covenant, migrated to France, where he became a Roman Catholic; went to Rome, and obtained a canonry in the famous "Casa Santa" of Loreto. There he died a few weeks later, at the age of thirty-seven. In 1646 his English poems were published: *Steps to the Temple* (an introduction to Herbert's *Temple*), the *Delights of the Muses*, etc. His poem entitled *Wishes for the Supposed Mistress*, perhaps his best known work, commences:—

Whoe'er she be,  
That not impossible she  
That shall command my heart and me.

Depth of thought and feeling and a readiness in the phrasing of language characterise the poems of Crashaw. His mind was of a highly devotional—in fact, mystical—turn; and this is shown especially in his later poems, which are disfigured by a vein of religious extravagance and that tendency for conceits which was the common fault of his age. In his *Hymn of the Nativity* (which may well be compared with Milton's, which it surpasses in sweetness and homeliness) he makes the shepherds say:—



We saw Thee in Thy balmy nest,  
 Young dawn of our eternal day;  
 We saw Thine eyes break from the East,  
 And chase the trembling shades away:  
 We saw Thee, and we blessed the sight,  
 We saw Thee by Thine own sweet light.

And the Hymn ends with the strikingly happy line:—

Ourselves become our own best sacrifice.

He describes the pious man as—

A happy soul that, all the way  
 To heaven, hath a summer's day.

In his poem of *The Flaming Heart*, he addresses St. Teresa in terms of religious rapture:—

O thou undaunted daughter of desires!  
 By all thy dower of lights and fires;  
 By all the eagle in thee, all the dove;  
 By all thy lives and deaths of love,  
 By thy large draughts of intellectual day,  
 And by thy thirsts of love more large than they.

In the *Epiphany Hymn* he speaks of the manifestation of the new gospel as contriving—

To disinherit the sun's rise  
 Delicately to displace  
 The day, and plant it fairer in thy face.

"In passionate conception (which is the soul of poetry) and harmonious metrical expression (which is its body), Crashaw at his best is very nearly supreme."—SAINTSBURY.

11. **Sir John Denham** (1615—1668), the son of the Chief Baron of Exchequer in Ireland, was born in Dublin (his mother an Irishwoman), went to Trinity College, Oxford, thence to Lincoln's Inn, where he was an idler and a gambler. He published his *Cooper's Hill* in 1642, and died insane in 1668. He may be said to be now unknown in our literature, save for his four lines on the Thames, added when the poem was republished by him in 1655:—

O could I flow like thee and make thy stream  
 My great example, as it is my theme!  
 Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull,  
 Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full.

The couplet was new in 1640; and Denham manages it very well.

12. **Abraham Cowley** (1618—1667) was born—ten years after Milton—in Cheapside, London, the posthumous son of a respectable stationer. His mother was able to procure him admission into Westminster School as a King's scholar; and thence he passed to Trinity College, Cambridge. When the Civil War broke out, Queen Henrietta Maria left England and settled in Paris. There Cowley acted as her secretary for twelve years, and spent most of his days and nights in deciphering the correspondence of the King and Queen, and in inventing new ciphers for them. He came to London in December, 1657, and received the degree of M.D. at Oxford, but again returned to France, where he remained till the Restoration, when he obtained the lease of some lands belonging to the Queen, which brought him in about £300 a year. He settled in a pretty house at Chertsey, on the banks of the Thames. There he died in his forty-ninth year; his body was carried by water in the King's barge to Westminster, and interred with great pomp in the Abbey by the side of Chaucer and Spenser. Cowley is perhaps the most astonishing instance of precocity in the record of English literature. He published his first volume of poems—*Poetical Blossoms*—at the age of fifteen; and some of the poems had been composed two years before. The following verses were written by Cowley at the age of thirteen. The poem is called *A Wish*:—

This only grant me, that my means may lie  
Too low for envy, for contempt too high.  
Some honour I would have,  
Not from great deeds, but good alone.  
The unknown are better than ill known  
Rumour can ope the grave,  
Acquaintance I would have, but when't depends  
Not on the number, but the choice, of friends.

When he had reached middle age, he wrote a poem in a similar vein, which he called *The Wish*:—

Ah, yet, ere I descend to th' grave,  
May I a small house and large garden have!  
And a few friends, and many books, both true,  
Both wise, and both delightful, too!

It was the reading of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* that first turned

Cowley to poetry. In his mother's parlour, among her books, chiefly works of devotion, "there was wont to lie Spenser's works: this I happened to fall upon, and was infinitely delighted with the stories of the knights, and giants, and monsters, and brave houses, which I found everywhere there; and, by degrees, with the tinkling of the rime and dance of the numbers: so that, I think, I had read him all over before I was twelve years old, and was thus made a poet." In his lifetime he was much the most popular poet in England: Cowley was everywhere and always spoken of, Milton never. In fact, he filled the same place in the literature of the seventeenth century that Tennyson did in the latter half of the nineteenth. Yet Pope, in the beginning of the eighteenth, could write of him thus:—

Who now reads Cowley? If he pleases yet,  
His moral pleases, not his pointed wit:  
Forgot his epic, nay, Pindaric<sup>1</sup> art,  
But still I love the language of his heart.

In plainer words—no one now reads his epic poem called the *Dauidis*; no one is much attracted by his *Pindarique Odes*; but his *Essays*, which are written in a pure, lively, and natural style—in "the language of the heart"—are still pleasant reading for many. Most of the *Pindarique Odes* are rhetorical exercises full of extravagant phrases, and they occasionally sink into puerility. One, entitled *The Muse*, runs:—

Go, the rich chariot instantly prepare;  
The Queen, my Muse, will take the air;  
Unruly Fancy with strong Judgment trace,  
Put in the nimble-footed Wit. . . .  
Let the Postilion Nature mount, and let  
The Coachman Art be set,

and so on. And Cowley also introduced the poetic cant which was to become so prevalent in the eighteenth century:—

Woe to her stubborn heart if once mine come  
Into the self-same room!  
'Twill tear and blow up all within,  
Like a grenado shot into a magazine

---

<sup>1</sup> Pindaric, from Pindar, the greatest of the Greek lyr'c poets, born about 522 B.C., died 443 B.C.

He dedicates an ode to Hobbes, the great philosopher of the *Leviathan*, in which he says:—

The Baltic, Euxine, and the Caspian,  
And slender-limbed Mediterrean,  
Seem narrow creeks to thee, and only fit  
For the poor wretched fisher-boats of wit.  
Thy nobler vessel the vast ocean tries.

His elegy *On the Death of Mr. Crashaw* is a tender and beautiful tribute to his memory, which opens:—

Poet and Saint! to thee alone are given  
The two most sacred names of earth and heav'n.

In his *Hymn to Light* he has some fine verses, though as a poem it is spoiled by forced conceits:—

When, goddess, thou lift'st up thy wakened head  
Out of the morning's purple bed,  
Thy quire of birds about thee play,  
And all the joyful world salutes the rising day.

In his *Ode to the Royal Society* he speaks thus of Bacon:—

From these and all long errors of the way,  
In which our wandering predecessors went,  
And like th' old Hebrews many years did stray  
In deserts but of small extent,  
Bacon, like Moses, led us forth at last,  
The barren wilderness he past,  
Did on the very border stand  
Of the blest promis'd land,  
And from the mountain's top of his exalted wit  
Saw it himself, and shew'd us it.

But he can sing in a less pompous fashion in his "Anacreontics."<sup>1</sup> Thus, in *The Grasshopper* he has some neat trochaics:—

Happy insect! What can be  
In happiness compared to thee?  
Fed with nourishment divine—  
The dewy morning's gentle wine!  
Nature waits upon thee still  
And thy verdant cup does fill!

(i) "In his love poems there is neither grace nor glow, nor tenderness nor truth. The passion is neither deeply felt nor lightly uttered."—WARD.

(ii) "In Cowley there is an inexhaustible fund of sense and ingenuity, buried in inextricable conceits, and entangled in the cobwebs of the schools."—HAZLITT.

<sup>1</sup> Anacreontics, from Anacreon, a famous Greek lyric poet, born about 563 B.C., died about 478 B.C.



13. **Henry Vaughan** (1622—1695), the "Silurist,"<sup>1</sup> was born at Skethiog-on-Usk, in Brecknockshire, passed his life in that village, died, and was buried there. He studied at Jesus College, Oxford, at first intending to follow the law, but he changed his mind and became a physician. He is one of the greatest religious poets of England; and his most important book of poems is the *Silex Scintillans*<sup>2</sup>—published in two parts, in 1651 and 1655. He was an admirer and follower of Herbert; but his own poems show much greater depth of feeling and more impassioned expression than anything in Herbert's verse. The *Silex Scintillans* is, like *The Temple*, introduced by a set of gnomic<sup>3</sup> verses, such as the following:—

When first thy eyes unveil, give thy soul leave  
To do the like; our bodies but forerun  
The spirit's duty. True hearts spread and heave  
Unto their God, as flowers do to the sun;  
Give Him thy first thoughts then; so shalt thou keep  
Him company all day, and in Him sleep.

His two poems, *The Retreat* and *Beyond the Veil*, are the best known. The former possibly gave a suggestion to Wordsworth, which he used with magnificent effect in his great ode, *The Intimations of Immortality*. The following are the lines referred to from *The Retreat*:—

Happy those early days when I  
Shin'd in my angel-infancy!

Before I taught my tongue to wound  
My conscience with a sinful sound,  
Or had the black art to dispense  
A sev'ral sin to ev'ry sense;  
But felt through all this fleshly dress  
Bright shoots of everlastingness.

The following is the first verse of *Beyond the Veil*:—

They are all gone into the world of light!  
And I alone sit lingering here;  
Their very memory is fair and bright,  
And my sad thoughts doth clear.

<sup>1</sup> *Silurist*, from that part of South-East Wales inhabited in Roman times by the Silures.

<sup>2</sup> *Silex Scintillans* = the flint that sends out sparks.

<sup>3</sup> Sententious, or in the nature of maxims or aphorisms.

It is, however, in his short poem, *The Night*, that he sounds his highest and keenest note :—

Dear Night ! this world's defeat ;  
The stop to busy fools ; care's check and curb ;  
The day of spirits ; my soul's calm retreat  
Which none disturb !  
Christ's progress, and His prayer-time ;  
The hours to which high Heaven doth climb.

God's silent, searching flight ;  
When my Lord's head is fill'd with dew, and all  
His locks are wet with the clear drops of night ;  
His still, soft call ;  
His knocking time ; the soul's dumb watch,  
When spirits their fair kindred catch.

Were all my loud, evil days  
Calm and unhaunted as is thy dark tent,  
Whose peace but by some angel's wing or voice  
Is seldom rent ;  
Then I in heaven all the long year  
Would keep, and never wander here.

There is in God—some say—  
A deep, but dazzling darkness ; as men here  
Say it is late and dusky, because they  
See not all clear.  
O for that Night ! where I in Him  
Might live invisible and dim !

It would be difficult to find in all the religious poetry of our literature four verses of such intense and spiritual insight.

Vaughan was an earnest advocate of early rising, and makes it a type of spiritual preparedness :—

So when that day and hour shall come  
In which Thyself will be the sun,  
Thou'lt find me dress'd and on my way,  
Watching the break of Thy great day.

"Vaughan is not more or less pious than Herbert, but his piety is much more mystical : his thoughts are deeper and farther brought. . . . The great age of the Church of England finds in Vaughan, at his best, its best poetical exponent."—SAINTSBURY.

## CHAPTER XII.

---

### MILTON AND THE PURITANS.

1. **New Influences.**—After the Elizabethan period a new set of influences enters, giving a distinct character and tone to the literature of the seventeenth century, which is crowned by the immortal work of John Milton. The growth of Puritanism as a potent force in religion and life, and the spread of new ideas which ended in the Great Rebellion, profoundly affected the literature of the time. It was an age of great controversy, religious and political, and much of its prose is characterised by virulence, scurrility, and a want of restraint which stamps many of the prose works of Milton himself. But the best side of Puritanism—that tendency to idealism, that aspiration for the higher life, for the perfect existence for man and the State—finds expression in the noble poetry of Milton and the prose writings of John Bunyan. The standard set up was an impossible one for the individual or the State; and this conviction, which forced itself in upon the minds of the people during the attempt to establish it, was not the least of the causes which brought about the Restoration, and the riotous licence which disgraced its literature.

2. **John Milton** (1608—1674).—Milton's grandfather was a Roman Catholic, who lived near Shotover, in Oxfordshire, and his son, John Milton's father, became a Protestant, and was disinherited. He went to London and established himself as a scrivener, and succeeded well in that branch of legal work. John Milton, the poet, was born in Bread Street, London, in 1608, and during his youth received very careful training, particularly in music, in which

art his father was accomplished. Thomas Young, a Presbyterian, became his tutor, and was long his friend; and when he was twelve years old he went to St. Paul's School, and entered Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1625. By that time he had acquired a knowledge of Latin, Greek, French, Italian, and some Hebrew.

Among his earliest examples of verse are some translations from the Psalms, and lines on the death of an infant, the daughter of his sister Anne. On Christmas morning, 1629, came the idea of his *Hymn on the Nativity*, a magnificent ode, one of the noblest bursts of song in the language, which showed that it could be attuned to strains not hitherto heard in the land. Milton took his degree of M.A. in 1632, and from this date five studious years were spent with his parents at Horton, to which place his father had retired on leaving business. During this time he wrote *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Arcades*, *Comus*, and *Lycidas*. After the death of his mother he went on an extended tour through Europe. With the best credentials from the English Ambassador at Paris, Lord Scudamore, he travelled to Italy, where he spent many months, and wrote his *Italian Sonnets*.

Public affairs in England had by this time become serious, and the poet shortened his tour and returned home in the summer of 1639. He took to teaching for a while, the pupils including his nephews and "the sons of gentlemen who were his intimate friends." He now entered on the second period of his career, and for the next twenty years wrote very little except prose. During his prose period he defended with masterly style, skill, and learning the Puritan revolt, bringing all the powers of his mighty pen to defend the principles which overthrew the established order of things in Church and State. His chief prose works are *Reasons of Church Government*, *Tracts on Divorce*, *Arcopagitica*—a magnificent plea for the liberty of the press—and the *Tractate on Education*.

But he paid heavily for these labours. In 1649 he became Latin Secretary to the Council of State, and about three years later he became totally blind at the age of forty-three. His public work ceased on the death of Cromwell, but the last years of his life were crowned by the immortal epics, *Paradise Lost*,



*Paradise Regained*, and the tragedy of *Samson Agonistes*, modelled on the Greek drama, which is, as Mark Pattison says, "the intensest utterance of the most intense of English poets."

Milton was married three times. His first wife was Mary Powell, of a Royalist family, who left him soon after their marriage; but she afterwards returned praying for forgiveness, which the poet readily granted, and, having received her parents into his house, he sheltered them in time of danger. She bore him four daughters, three of whom lived to maturity. His second wife was Catherine Woodcock, who died in the second year of their marriage, and whom he commemorated in a fine sonnet and of whom he speaks as his "late espoused saint." His third wife was Elizabeth Minshull, who survived him.

3. **His Works.**—Milton is the greatest epic poet that the English nation has produced. He is also the most learned. Even when a boy he had seen and felt that poetry was to be the vocation of his life; and, as a young man, he spoke himself of "an inward prompting which grows daily upon me that by labour and intent study" he might succeed in producing something that "after-times should not willingly let die." This was the governing idea of his life, and the key to the history of his mind. He was always a hard student. "From my twelfth year," he says, "I scarcely ever went to bed before midnight, which was the first cause of injury to my eyes." During his period of seclusion at Horton he seems to have read through more than eighty different authors in Greek, Latin, French, Italian, and English.

Hallam speaks of his *Hymn on the Nativity* as "perhaps the finest ode in the English language," and this is no exaggerated praise. It opens with the advent of Peace in the world at the birth of Christ; then follows a celestial harmony—"the helmed cherubim and hooded seraphim, harping in loud and solemn quire." Then comes a vision of Truth and Justice returning to men "orb'd in a rainbow," with Mercy throned between. But man has first to be redeemed, and heathen rites and deities swept away, and then darkness dispelled before the rising "rays of Bethlehem." The following is one of the concluding stanzas:—

So when the sun in bed,  
Curtain'd with cloudy red,  
Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,  
The flocking shadows pale

Troop to th' infernal jail,  
 Each fetter'd ghost slips to his several grave;  
 And the yellow-skirted fays  
 Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-lov'd maze.

His *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* are short idylls, written in a free and spontaneous manner, which put the problem of life in the form of two opposite pleadings. Is it best "to scorn delights and live laborious days"? Or might one "live in unreproved pleasures free," enjoying all the good things that Nature and civilisation can give us? Both are good, both are right; and Milton does not decide exclusively in favour of either. The two poems "may be regarded as one poem, whose theme is the praise of the reasonable life."

"These two poems have the freedom and frolic, the natural space of movement, the improvisation, of the best Elizabethan examples, while both thoughts and words are under a strict economy unknown to the diffuse exuberance of the Spenserians."—MARK PATTISON.

The *Comus* is a masque, the music for which was furnished by Henry Lawes, a well-known composer of the time. It was "the richest fruit of Milton's early genius," and contains some of his noblest lines. The answer to the two pleadings in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* is to be found in *Comus*. This poem has added many contributions to the common stock of quotations; such are, among many others, the lines:—

And airy tongues that syllable men's names.  
 Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould  
 Breathe such divine entrancing ravishment?  
 It were a journey like the path to Heaven  
 To help you find them.  
 To lay their just hands on that golden key  
 That opes the palace of eternity.

His *Lycidas*, which was written in 1637, reaches, according to Mark Pattison, "the high-water mark of English poetry." It is an elegiac ode to the memory of a dear friend, Edward King, a Fellow of Christ's College, who was drowned while crossing from Chester to Dublin. It is one of the five greatest elegies in the English language: the others are Shelley's *Adonais*; Emerson's *Threnody*; Tennyson's *In Memoriam*; and Matthew Arnold's *Thyrsis*. A great

critic has said that the first five lines of the *Lycidas* are the most musical in the whole range of English poetry:—

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more,  
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,  
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,  
And, with forced fingers rude,  
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.<sup>1</sup>

Milton's notion of fame, as not given by mere rumour or external reputation, but as the absolutely truthful record of what true good has been done by man, is set forth in the following from *Lycidas*:—

Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,  
Nor in the glistening foil  
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies;  
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,  
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;  
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,  
Of so much fame in Heaven expect thy meed.

During the period of his early poems, the predominating literary influence that acted on his mind was that of Italian poets and of Edmund Spenser.

From the year 1637 to 1657 Milton's muse was silent. During these twenty years his time was occupied in writing furious political pamphlets, or in translating into noble Latin despatches to foreign courts. Ferocious scoldings, unbridled invective, furious reprobation, storms of vituperation and personal reproach characterise his controversial pamphlets. But the spirit of them is always and everywhere Milton's inborn and deep-seated love of liberty. Here and there are sprinkled noble passages of autobiography. The following is an example, and the long and too-involved sentence gives a good idea of Milton's prose style:—

I had my time, as others have who have good learning bestowed upon them, to be sent to those places where the opinion was it might be sooner attained; and, as the manner is, was not unstudied in those authors which are most commended, whereof some were grave orators and historians, whom methought I loved indeed, but as my age then was, so I understood them; others were the smooth elegiac poets, whereof the schools are not scarce; whom both for the pleasing sound of their numerous writings, which in imitation I found most easy, and most agreeable to nature's part in me, and for their matter, which what it is there be few who know not, I was so allowed to read, that no recreation came to me better welcome.

<sup>1</sup> These lines probably contain a larger number of liquids (l, m, n, r) than any other five lines in English poetry.

(i) In one of his pamphlets he calls his opponent "a cold," "a pork," "an idiot by breeding and a solicitor by presumption," "an unswilled hogshead," "a brazen ass." All this is bad manners; but it is the manners of the time.

(ii) The seventeenth century was "the greatest pamphleteering age in English history." The age was a period of revolution, of reconstruction; old beliefs were dying, old traditions fading. There were no newspapers; and therefore, when a man had a new idea or a plan he believed in, his appeal to the public was made in pamphlet form.

In this long interval of prose, if Milton wrote verse at all, it was in the form of an occasional sonnet. The best of them are those which begin with the lines, "Captain or Colonel, or Knight in Arms," "When I consider how my light is spent," "Methought I saw my late espoused saint." But the noblest and strongest of them all is that written in 1655 on the massacre of the Waldenses in Piedmont—a slaughter of his own subjects by Charles Emmanuel II., Duke of Savoy:—

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones  
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;  
Ev'n them who kept thy truth so pure of old,  
When all our fathers worshipt stocks and stones,  
Forget not: in thy book record their groans  
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold  
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled  
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans  
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they  
To Heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow  
O'er all th' Italian fields where still doth sway  
The triple Tyrant; that from these may grow  
A hundredfold, who, having learnt thy way,  
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

It is interesting to compare the opinions of great critics on these sonnets. The above verses on *The Massacre in Piedmont* might have been carved in granite or cast in bronze; but Dr. Johnson, who had a strong personal antipathy to the Puritan poet, called it "carving heads upon cherry-stones." Wordsworth, on the other hand, said in his well-known sonnet on the *Sonnet*:—

In *his* hand  
The thing became a trumpet, whence he blew  
Soul-animating strains, alas! too few.

The *Areopagitica: A Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing* is Milton's best known and also his greatest prose work.



It was published in 1644. He wrote a splendid prose—involved, elaborate, sometimes more Latin than English, but always overweighted with thought, and glowing with indignation and “rapt enthusiasm.” He could write Latin as well as, and sometimes better than, English; and hence there are often appearances of pedantry in his style. The *Areopagitica* contains the famous passage: “Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks. Methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam; purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms.” This is a good example of that sustained energy and grandeur typical alike of his poetry and prose. It contains also the well-known aphorisms: “Revolutions of ages do not oft recover the love of a rejected truth”; “Opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making”; “As good almost kill a man as kill a good book.” But when Milton wrote prose he had the use, he says, but of his left hand; yet we might truly say he was ambidextrous.

His three great masterpieces in verse are the *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*. The *Paradise Lost* was begun in 1657. Milton, as we have seen, had been blind since the year 1652. His eyes, though without the power of vision, were—

Clear  
To outward view of blemish or of spot;

and this was the only point on which he could ever accuse himself of even the appearance of hypocrisy. He had lost his sight—

In liberty's defence, my noble task,  
Of which all Europe rings from side to side.

At the Restoration in 1660, Milton had to go into hiding; but he still went on with the writing of *Paradise Lost*, which he completed in the year 1663. Much of it was written—

In darkness, and with dangers compass round,  
And solitude.



It was a work "not raised from the heat of youth or from the vapours of wine," but "obtained by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out His seraphim, with the hallowed fire of His altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom He pleases." Milton handed the completed manuscript to his young Quaker friend, Thomas Ellwood, at Chalfont St. Giles (in the county of Bucks), whither he had retired during the year of the Great Plague (1665). When Ellwood returned the poem, he remarked, "Thou hast said much here of *Paradise Lost*, but what hast thou to say of *Paradise Found*?" Milton said nothing, "fell into a muse" on the suggestion, and in the same year began *Paradise Regained*.

The *Paradise Lost* is one of the few great and immortal books of the world. Milton's mind dwelt habitually in the vast, the lofty, the sublime; and his powers of expression are everywhere adequate to his subject.

(i) "There are no such vistas and avenues of verse as Milton's. In reading *Paradise Lost* one has a feeling of spaciousness such as no other poet gives. He showed from the first that larger style which was to be his peculiar distinction. The strain heard in his earlier productions is of a higher mood as regards metrical construction than anything that had thrilled the English ear before, giving no uncertain augury of him who was to show what sonorous metal lay silent, till he touched the keys in the epical organ-pipes of our various language, that have never since felt the strain of such prevailing breath."—RUSSELL LOWELL.

(ii) Milton's two greater poems are steeped in classical allusions on the one hand, and in scriptural phrases and allusions on the other. He had always been a constant and diligent student of the Authorised Version, which was published in 1611, when Milton was a child of three.

(iii) The conception of the *Paradise Lost* is Hebraic; but its form, imagery, and style are classical, and they exhibit the results of thirty years' hard reading in Greek, Latin, and Italian literature.

When, after the disappearance of the Plague, Milton returned to his house in London, Ellwood called upon him; and Milton "showed me his second poem, called *Paradise Regained*, and in a pleasant tone said to me: 'This is owing to you; for you put it into my head by the question you put to me at Chalfont, which before I had not thought of.'" *Paradise Regained* is very simple in its plot: it is only the story of the Temptation. Milton always thought it his best work; but it is wanting in

action and human interest, with long discussions on the religious problems of the day. It is, however, a perfectly finished work, which has nothing of the exuberance and colour of his earlier poems; there is not a single simile in the first three books. Wordsworth considered it "the most perfect in execution of anything written by Milton"; and Coleridge gave as his deliberate opinion that "in its kind it is the most perfect poem extant." "The whole of the speeches and debates in Pandemonium are," says Hazlitt, "well worthy of the place and the occasion—with gods for speakers, and angels and archangels for hearers. There is a decided manly tone in the arguments and sentiments, an eloquent dogmatism, as if each person spoke from thorough conviction."

During the Protectorate of Cromwell, Milton believed that with his inner eye he saw the English nation "mewing her mighty youth"; in 1660 the Stuarts had come back; the great deliverance was undone, the old monarchy was once more placed in power. It was a bitter disappointment to the Republican and the Puritan parties, and this disappointment is given voice to in the *Samson Agonistes*. The poem is an autobiography. It is a drama on the Greek model—with few personages, a central figure, and a chorus. Probably the finest passage in the poem—and it is one of the finest passages in all literature—is the chorus beginning:—

This, this is he! Softly awhile,  
Let us not break in upon him:  
O change beyond report, thought, or belief!

The play has all "the chiselled austerity of Greek tragedy."

"The triumphant Royalist reaction of 1660, when the old serpent bruised the heel of Freedom by totally crushing Puritanism, is singular in this, that the agonised cry of the beaten party has been preserved in a cotemporary monument, the intensest utterance of the most intense of English poets—the *Samson Agonistes*."—MARK PATTISON.

Whatever Milton wrote, whether in early youth or in contemplative old age, bears the indelible mark of real nobility and greatness. When he was barely out of his teens he wrote a sonnet *To the Nightingale*, which concludes with the noble lines:—

Whether the Muse or Love call thee his mate,  
Both them I serve, and of their train am I.

A few years after he wrote the short poem *At a Solemn Musick*, and the close is a prelude to his later work:—

O, may we soon again renew that song,  
And keep in tune with Heav'n, till God ere long  
To His celestial consort us unite,  
To live with Him, and sing in endless morn of light!

There are few lines in the whole range of English verse that combine so fully the two qualities of beauty and nobility as these from *Lycidas*:—

Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,  
And daffodillies fill their cups with tears,  
To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.  
For so, to interpose a little ease,  
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise;  
Ay me! Whilst thee the shores and sounding seas  
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurl'd,  
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,  
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide  
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world.

The close of his *Paradise Lost*, which was finished in old age, is not less magnificent:—

They, looking back, all the eastern side beheld  
Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,  
Wav'd over by that flaming brand; the gate  
With dreadful faces throng'd and fiery arms.  
Some natural tears they dropp'd, but wip'd them soon:  
The world was all before them, where to choose  
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:  
They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,  
Through Eden took their solitary way.

And in his latest poem, the *Samson Agonistes* (Samson the Agonist or wrestler) we find numerous lines as great as these:—

Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him  
Eyeless in Gaza, at the mill with slaves—

or:—

The Sun to me is dark  
And silent as the Moon,  
When she deserts the night,  
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.

(i) Of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, Savage Landor writes: "Whenever I come to the end of these poems, or either of them, it is always with a sigh of regret."

(ii) Milton himself says: "He who would write well in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem."

4. **Andrew Marvell** (1621—1678) was born in the village of Winestead, near Spurn Head, in Yorkshire, in the parish of which his father was vicar. He graduated at Cambridge, in 1638, went abroad to travel, and is said to have been Secretary to the British Embassy at Constantinople. In 1650 Marvell became tutor to Mary (afterwards Duchess of Buckingham), the daughter of Lord Fairfax, the Parliamentary general, and resided at his manor-house of Nun-Appleton, in Yorkshire, where he wrote many of his poems. In 1657 he was recommended to President Bradshaw as Assistant Latin (that is, Foreign) Secretary to the Council of State by Milton, who describes him in his letter as "well read in the Latin and Greek authors," and as also well acquainted with the French, Italian, Spanish, and Dutch languages. He was not selected at that time; but later on the Lord Protector appointed him joint Latin Secretary with Milton. Shortly before the Restoration, he was elected member for Hull, and sat "a Roman patriot incorruptible and inflexible, in the corrupt and servile Parliaments of Charles II." Not only a fine lyrist and a vigorous satirist, he was also one of the first pamphleteers of his day—and that day was the day of pamphlets, which possessed all the political influence enjoyed at present by the daily newspaper. His satiric poems are full of a vigorous and coarse humour. He thus describes Holland—a country he disliked for harbouring the exiled Charles II. :—

Holland, that scarce deserves the name of land,  
As but the off-scouring of the British sand;  
And so much earth as was contributed  
By English pilots when they heaved the lead.  
—The fish oft-times the burgher dispossessed,  
And sat, not as a meat, but as a guest.  
And oft the Tritons and the sea-nymphs saw  
Whole shoals of Dutch served up for cabillau.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

Not who first sees the rising sun commands;  
But who could first discern the rising lands.  
Who best could know to pump an earth so leak,  
Him they their Lord, and Country's Father, speak.  
To make a bank was a great plot of state;  
Invent a shovel, and be magistrate.

<sup>1</sup> *cabillaud* (French) = codfish.



His finest poem is probably that on the *Emigrants in the Bermudas*. It ends with the lines :—

Thus sang they in the English boat,  
An holy and a cheerful note ;  
And all the way to guide their chime,  
With falling oars they kept the time.

This is genuine English writing—both as regards feeling and as regards style. His poem *The Garden* was written at first in Latin and then translated into English verse. The following is a stanza :—

What wondrous life is this I lead !  
Ripe apples drop about my head ;  
The luscious clusters of the vine  
Upon my mouth do crush their wine ;  
The nectarine, and curious peach,  
Into my hands themselves do reach ;  
Stumbling on melons, as I pass,  
Insnares with flowers, I fall on grass.

The poem *A Drop of Dew* is probably that in which he has reached his highest flight :—

See how the orient dew,  
Shed from the bosom of the morn  
Into the blowing roses,  
(Yet careless of its mansion new  
For the clear region where 'twas born,)  
Round in itself incloses<sup>1</sup> ;  
And, in its little globe's extent,  
Frames, as it can, its native element.  
How it the purple flower does slight,  
Scarce touching where it lies,  
But gazing back upon the skies,  
Shines with a mournful light,  
Like its own tear,  
Because so long divided from the sphere.  
Restless it rolls, and unsecure,  
Trembling, lest it grow impure ;  
Till the warm sun pity its pain,  
And to the skies exhale it back again.

Marvell was an admirer and follower of Cromwell ; but he was not a bigoted partisan—not so much of a partisan as to refuse his admiration to the King and to many of the Royalists. When he wrote his *Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland*, he

<sup>1</sup> "incloses," used intransitively.

included in it that famous verse on the demeanour of Charles I. on the fatal day of January 30th, 1649 :—

He nothing common did, or mean,  
Upon that memorable scene,  
But with his keener eye  
The axe's edge did try;  
Nor called the gods with vulgar spite  
To vindicate his helpless right;  
But bowed his comely head  
Down, as upon a bed.

(i) "Marvell showed how well he understood what he was giving to the world in this ode, one of the least known but among the grandest which the English language possesses, when he called it 'Horatian.' In its whole treatment it reminds us of the highest to which the greatest Latin artist in lyrical poetry did, when at his best, attain."—ARCHBISHOP TRENCH.

(ii) "As a poet Marvell is very unequal. He has depth of feeling, descriptive power, melody; his study of the classics could not fail to teach him form. But he is often slovenly, sometimes intolerably diffuse, especially when he is seduced by the facility of the octosyllabic couplet."—GOLDWIN SMITH.

5. **John Bunyan** (1628—1688).—Bunyan, the son of a tinker, was born at Elstow, near Bedford. When only sixteen he enlisted in the Parliamentary army, in which he served for about two years. He adopted his father's trade, and any little education he got was received at home. He married at the age of twenty: his wife brought him as a dowry two religious books, which he studied, and he joined a Nonconformist body, among whom he now and then preached. In 1660 he was arrested for preaching, thrown into Bedford gaol, and was detained there—with short intervals of release—till the year 1672. In that year he obtained a licence to preach, but, when the Declaration of Indulgence was cancelled, he was again carried to prison. During his six months of imprisonment at this time he wrote the first part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. On his release, and for the last sixteen years of his life, he was minister of a church at Bedford. He wrote about sixty books; but the best and the best known are *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1677 and 1684), the *Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (1680), and the *Holy War* (1682).

Bunyan is remarkable in the history of literature as a writer of pure Saxon English, which displays a simplicity and naturalness

of style that has never been surpassed. He knew no language but his own; and he seems to have read no literary works. But he was thoroughly versed in one book, and that book was the Bible. He is said to have had the whole of the Authorised Version by heart; and this was his sole teacher. His knowledge of human nature, his quiet observation of human peculiarities, his acquaintance with all the racy dialects of the countryside, and his fervid imagination, would have made him a great dramatist. The conversations in *The Pilgrim's Progress* show him to have had dramatic power in a high degree. His names are most apposite: Mr. By-ends, Mr. Worldly Wiseman, Mrs. Bats-eyes, Mr. Facing-both-ways, my Lord Hategood, Mr. Talkative, Mrs. Timorous, Giant Despair and Diffidence his wife. "The characteristic peculiarity of *The Pilgrim's Progress*," says Macaulay, "is that it is the only work of its kind which possesses a strong human interest. Other allegories only amuse the fancy. The allegory of Bunyan has been read by many thousands with tears." "He had," says an eminent critic, "one of the greatest gifts of phrase—of picking up the right word or the right half-dozen words—that man has ever had." He writes in a plain and homely, but always in a vivid and picturesque style; and he is one of the few great masters of pure English. Like Milton, he did not "belong" to the age of Charles II. and the Restoration.

(i) "His is a home-spun style, not a manufactured one . . . It is a clear stream of current English, the vernacular speech of his age, sometimes, indeed, in its rusticity and coarseness, but always in its plainness and in its strength. . . . He saw the things of which he was writing as distinctly with his mind's eye as if they were indeed passing before him in a dream."—SOUTHEY.

(ii) "By universal consent the inspired tinker is ranked with our English classics; yet, so late as 1782, Cowper dared not name him in his poetry, lest the name should provoke a sneer."—CHAMBERS.

(iii) "The style of Bunyan is delightful to every reader, and invaluable as a study to every person who wishes to obtain a wide command over the English language. . . . There is no book in our literature on which we would so readily stake the fame of the old unpolluted English language, no book which shows so well how rich that language is in its own proper wealth, and how little it has been improved by all that it has borrowed."—MACAULAY.

6. **Richard Baxter** (1615—1691), a distinguished writer, a famous Nonconformist divine, and an eloquent theologian, was

born at Eaton Constantine, near Rowton, in Shropshire, in the twelfth year of the reign of James I. His days fell upon the troubled time of the Civil War; and the different disputes and controversies in politics and in theology prevented him from leading the life of tranquil study that was the desire of his heart. Like Fuller, he was a man of moderate views; as he says himself, "I make no doubt that both parties were to blame, and I will not be he that will justify either of them." But his opinions leaned strongly to the side of the Parliamentary party, and he was for a short time chaplain to Colonel Whalley's regiment in Cromwell's army. In 1647 he went into retirement, and, after living for a while among friends, he returned to Kidderminster, where he had been appointed "preacher," or assistant to the vicar, in 1641. Here, while labouring assiduously and successfully amongst the weavers of the town, he showed, in spite of constant ill-health, a wonderful literary activity. After the execution of Charles I. in 1649 (an act which he regarded with horror), he worked patiently for toleration, and was one of those most active in planning the Restoration. In 1660 he was appointed one of the chaplains in ordinary to Charles II., and was also offered the bishopric of Hereford—an office which he declined on conscientious grounds. The Act of Uniformity, in 1662, compelled him to silence: three days after the passing of that Act he publicly bade farewell to the Church of England in Blackfriars Church; and from that time he was the subject of persecution and imprisonment—even during the reign of Charles II. His treatment was worse in the time of James II. He was tried before the notorious Judge Jeffreys on the charge of "libelling the Established Church," was fined five hundred marks, and for non-payment was kept in prison for more than a year. He died in London in the year 1691—only a "moderate Nonconformist" and a very "unwilling Separatist," and is said to have had the greatest private funeral ever till then seen in England. He was, in spite of all his trials and unsettled life, a most diligent and prolific writer. He wrote 168 works, the best of which is *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*, produced in 1650, which will always remain a classic. He is said never to have altered or corrected a line: he never



recast a sentence or bestowed a thought on its rhythm, or the balance of its parts; but he had command of a free, vigorous, modern, and earnest style. There is hardly one word in his books that has become obsolete.

He also wrote a remarkable autobiography, from which the following extract is taken:—

I cannot forget that in my youth, in those late times when we lost the labours of some of our conformable godly teachers for not reading publicly *The Book of Sports* and dancing on the Lord's Day, one of my father's own tenants was the town piper, hired by the year, for many years together, and the place of the dancing assembly was not a hundred yards from our door. We could not, on the Lord's Day, either read a chapter, or pray, or sing a psalm, or catechise, or instruct a servant, but with the noise of the pipe and tabor, and the shoutings in the streets, continually in our ears. Even among a tractable people, we were the common scorn of all the rabble in the streets, and called puritans, precisians, and hypocrites, because we rather chose to read the Scriptures than to do as they did; though there was no savour of nonconformity in our family. And when the people by the book were allowed to play and dance out of public service-time, they could so hardly break off their sports that many a time the reader was fain to stay till the piper and players would give over. Sometimes the morris-dancers would come into the church in all their linen, and scarfs, and antic dresses, with morris-bells jingling at their legs; and as soon as common prayer was read, did haste out presently to their play again.

(i) His *Call to the Unconverted* was so popular that 20,000 copies were sold in a single year.

(ii) By the Act of Uniformity (1662) holders of Church livings had to be ordained by a bishop; the order in the Prayer Book to be adhered to; the Covenant renounced; passive obedience to be believed in and advocated, etc. Some 1,800 clergymen, among them Richard Baxter, gave up their livings and left the Church.

7. **William Prynne** (1600—1669), was a graduate of Oxford and a barrister-at-law. He early identified himself with the Puritan movement, and wrote several pamphlets on controversial subjects, religious and social. In 1633 he published *Histriomastix: The Players' Scourge*, a huge work of over a thousand pages, in which he attacked, with great vehemence and abuse, all play-acting and play-writing as contrary to religion and morality. He was brought before the Star Chamber, and sentenced to perpetual imprisonment, to a fine of £5,000, and to have his ears cut off in the pillory. This did not silence him: he attacked Archbishop Laud, was fined in a similar sum, and branded on both cheeks. He also opposed

Cromwell, and was imprisoned by him. He survived to the Restoration, was made keeper of the State papers in the Tower, and wrote three volumes of *Records* on the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the English monarchy.

8. **George Fox** (1624—1690), the Founder of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, was one of the most remarkable religious enthusiasts of the seventeenth century. He was the son of a weaver at Fenny Drayton, Leicestershire, and was without any education when apprenticed to trade at an early age. About the age of twenty he took to roaming through the country, preaching wherever he chanced to stop. His views were extreme: he preached against church services, and against orders of the clergy, and held that the only guide to religion and life was "the light of Christ within." He objected to all social distinctions, and would doff his hat to no man. Such an uncompromising attitude, and a zeal which led him to interrupt church services, brought him into constant trouble, and he was much persecuted and endured many imprisonments. His writings are often mystical and unintelligible; but his *Journal* is of great interest as a picture of the man, and throws light upon the stirring age in which he lived.

## CHAPTER XIII.

---

### LATER SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PROSE.

1. **Introductory.**—As we have already pointed out, new influences entered into the life of the seventeenth century, which moulded and fashioned the character of its literature. New thoughts in religion, new forces in politics, new powers in social matters, had been slowly, steadily, and irresistibly rising into supremacy from the beginning of the Stuart reign, and finally became so strong that they led a king to the scaffold, and handed over the government of England to a section of Republicans. Charles I. was executed in 1649; and, though his son came back to the throne in 1660, the face, the manners, the thoughts of England and of Englishmen had undergone a complete internal change. The Puritan party was everywhere the ruling party; and its views and convictions in religion, in politics, and in literature held unquestioned sway in every part of England. Of Milton we have already spoken, who was by far the greatest and most powerful writer, both in prose and verse, on the side of the Puritan party. On the Royalist and Church side there arose a number of great divines, who left behind them an imperishable monument of the religious thought of the age, and the profound depths to which religious feeling was stirred. The greatest among them was **Jeremy Taylor**, the author of *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*, Isaac Barrow, William Chillingworth, John Hales, John Tillotson, and Robert South. These were distinguished alike for their eloquence and the majesty of their prose writings. **Thomas Hobbes**, the author of the *Leviathan* (1651), stands at the head of the list of prose writers of the Caroline period. His style is clear and accurate, but it is hard and even arid; in fact,

it has been called "crabbed." But his handling of his subject always shows enormous power.—**John Earle**, Bishop of Worcester, was another writer of "characters," like Hall and Overbury. He delights in aphorisms, epigrams, and antitheses. A man of lively wit, he did much to make the English sentence short, clear, and sparkling.—**Sir Thomas Browne**, the physician of Norwich, the author of *Urn Burial*, brought back English style to the Latin model, and used Latin words in very large proportion. He, Milton, and Jeremy Taylor are the three chief examples of ornate and Latinised English in the seventeenth century.—**Izaak Walton**, on the other hand, employed a simple, quiet, and homely style; but there is always an artistic grace in it. His *Complete Angler* (1653) will always be read and always enjoyed.—**Lord Clarendon** (Edward Hyde), the author of the *History of the Great Rebellion* (not published till 1702—twenty-eight years after his death), and the grandfather of two Queens of England, was, like Bacon, a man who combined a wide personal knowledge of affairs with great literary powers. He made history as well as recorded it, and his *History* is notable for the truth and vivid presentation of its portraits of prominent characters.—With **Abraham Cowley**, the author of *Essays* (1656), we come to "a sort of half-way house between Bacon and Addison." He is one of those kindly English authors who, like Fuller and Lamb, admit us to their intimacy, and write with a personal savour that is always attractive. The kindly ease and good breeding of an English gentleman may be said to make their appearance for the first time in our literature with the *Essays* of Abraham Cowley.

2. **Jeremy Taylor** (1613—1667) was one of the greatest Anglican divines and masters of English prose of the seventeenth century. His father was a barber in Cambridge, but of a family to which Rowland Taylor, the Marian martyr, belonged. Educated in the Grammar School and University of his native town, where he became noted for his learning and ability, he was ordained at twenty-one, and his eloquence and reputation soon gained the notice of Archbishop Laud, who made him his chaplain and advanced him to a fellowship in All Souls' College, Oxford. A moderate Royalist, both in principle and practice, in days when



party feeling was at the highest, he served as chaplain to the army, and was present at the engagement before Cardigan Castle, where he was taken prisoner, but soon released, when he retired to Wales. He accompanied Lord Conway to Ireland in 1658, was appointed to a lectureship in Lisburn Church, and after the Restoration he was promoted to the bishopric of Down and Connor, and made Chancellor of Dublin University. He died in 1667 from a fever caught when visiting a sick parishioner, and was buried in Dromore Cathedral.

His first great work was the *Liberty of Prophesying* (1647), and the remainder of the title explains its scope—"Showing the Unreasonableness of prescribing to other Men's Faith, and the iniquity of persecuting Differing Opinions"; it is a fine plea for toleration. More noted, and long widely read, are his *Holy Living* (1650) and *Holy Dying* (1651), which have been called "a divine pastoral." Taylor's style is rich even to luxury, full of the most imaginative illustrations, and often overloaded with ornament. He has been called the "English Chrysostom," the "Shakespeare of English prose," the "Spenser of divinity," and other such appellations. The last title is a happy term, for he has the same wealth of style, phrase, and description that Spenser has, and the same boundless delight in setting forth his thoughts in a thousand different ways. The following passage is a fair example of his style:—

All the succession of time, all the changes in nature, all the varieties of light and darkness, the thousand thousands of accidents in the world, and every contingency to every man and to every creature, doth preach our funeral sermon, and call us to look and see how the old sexton, Time, throws up the earth, and digs a grave, where we must lay our sins or our sorrows, and sow our bodies, till they rise again in a fair or intolerable eternity. Every revolution which the sun makes about the world divides between life and death, and death possesses both those portions by the next morrow; and we are dead to all those months which we have already lived, and we shall never live them over again, and still God makes little periods of our age.

The following beautiful and musical passage, which will bear close examination, is a fine instance of that apparent artlessness which is the perfection of art:—

For so have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass and soaring upwards, singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven and climb above the

clouds; but the poor bird was beaten back by the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest than it could recover by the libration and frequent weighing of his wings, till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over, and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing as if it had learned music and motion of an angel as he passed sometimes through the air about his ministeries here below.

"His style speaks for itself. It is incomparably eloquent and spirited. It has also the great merit of a singularly rich vein of wit, kept in check by regard to the nature of the subjects discussed, but constantly present. . . . There is in its periods a singular subdued pathos which it is difficult to analyse, but which is indicated with exquisite subtlety and skill by means of the choice and arrangement of very simple words in the midst of long passages."—SIR JAMES STEPHEN.

3. **Isaac Barrow** (1630—1677) was born in London, and was the son of a linen-draper. Having studied at Cambridge, he travelled on the continent for several years, proceeding through Central Europe and Italy to Asia Minor. He was a distinguished and many-sided scholar, and held successively professorships of Greek and Mathematics at Cambridge. From his scientific studies he turned and gave himself to theology, and afterwards became one of the King's chaplains, Master of Trinity (the King said he had given the mastership to "the best scholar in England"), and Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge. He often wrote his sermons three or four times over before being satisfied with them. He cannot be said to have believed that "brevity is the soul of wit," for he preached a charity sermon before the Lord Mayor which took him three hours and a half to read. A friend asked him, on leaving the pulpit, if he were not tired. "Yes, indeed," was the reply; "I began to be weary standing so long." His style is clear, but his sentences are too long, contain too many clauses, and therefore want unity. The following is an example:—

Sometimes wit is wrapped in a dress of humorous expression; sometimes it lurketh under an odd similitude; sometimes it is lodged in a sly question, and in a smart answer, in a quirkish reason, in a shrewd intimation, in cunningly diverting or cleverly retorting an objection; sometimes it is couched in a bold scheme of speech, in a tart irony, in a lusty hyperbole, in a startling metaphor, in a plausible reconciling of contradiction, or in acute nonsense, etc., etc.

And so on for ten lines more. The fault here arises from an

embarrassment of wealth, and hence the so-called sentence, which ought to have been broken up into six or eight, produces no unified or complete impression upon the mind. Half of it would have been worth double the whole.

As a divine, Barrow is principally known as the author of the *Treatise of the Pope's Supremacy*. If he is read at all, it is in his *Sermons*, which are written in a style "always animated and rich."

4. **John Hales** (1584—1656), the "Ever Memorable," was born at Bath, and entering Oxford University, became in time a Fellow of Merton, and afterwards Lecturer in Greek. He was Chaplain to the Embassy at The Hague, and was a frequent visitor for months at the Synod of Dort, of which he wrote an account in a series of letters to Sir Dudley Carleton, the ambassador, which were published in his posthumous work, *Golden Remains*. Lord Clarendon says of these that they were the "best memorial of the ignorance, and passion and animosity, and the injustice of that convention." Its effect on Hales was to convert him from Calvinism, and he became a most able defender of the great principle of toleration in religious matters. Hating strife arising from differences in belief, he retired for years to Eton, where he had a fellowship. He was ejected from his Canonry of Windsor by the dominant party in 1649, deprived of his fellowship, and obliged to sell a large portion of his library to maintain himself. His learning was vast, his intellectual gifts of the highest kind, and his reputation was great among the ablest men of his own day. Most of his writings are controversial, and deal with the great religious and political questions which kept the seventeenth century in a ferment. The following is an example of his style:—

Let me therefore advise you in reading to have a care of those discourses which express domestic and private actions, especially if they be such wherein your self purposes to venture fortunes. For if you rectify a little your conceit, you shall see that it is the same wisdom which manages private business and state affairs, and that the one is acted with as much folly and ease as the other. . . . To think that there is more wisdom placed in these specious matters than in private carriages, is the same error as if you should think there were more art required to paint a king than a country gentleman: whereas your Dutch pieces may serve to confute you, wherein you shall see a cup of Rhenish wine, a dish of radishes, a brass pan, an Holland cheese, the fishermen selling fish at Scheveling, or the kitchen-maid spitting a loin of mutton, done with as great delicacy and choiceness of art as can be expressed in the delineation of the greatest monarch in the world.

5. **William Chillingworth** (1602—1644) was born and educated at Oxford, and became one of the most celebrated controversialists of his time. He held a fellowship at Trinity College, Oxford, and was converted to the Roman Catholic faith by a Jesuit named Fisher. He then went to Douai, and being asked to explain his reasons for the change of religion, he proceeded to examine the whole ground of debate, which left him in the position, as he says himself, of a "doubting papist." Laud was his godfather, and Laud's influence, directed by correspondence and aided by the advice of other friends, carried him back to Oxford and to a reconversion to Anglican views. This brought upon him a controversy, and he wrote the *Religion of the Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation*, one of the ablest defences of the Protestant standpoint ever written. He was a Royalist, and held the chancellorship of Salisbury, to which, not without reluctance on his part, he was appointed in 1638. Of his change of views he says himself :—

And yet this man thinks himself no more to blame for all these changes, than a traveller who, using all diligence to find the right way to some remote city, did yet mistake it, and after find his error and amend it. Nay, he stands upon his justification so far, as to maintain that his alterations, not only to you, but also from you, by God's mercy, were the most satisfactory actions to himself that ever he did, and the greatest victories that ever he obtained over himself and his affections, in these things which in this world are most precious.

6. **John Tillotson** (1630—1694) was the son of a clothier at Sowerby, near Halifax, in Yorkshire. He was educated at Clare Hall, Cambridge ; and, after taking orders, quickly gained a reputation for pulpit eloquence. His rise was rapid: from being preacher at Lincoln's Inn, he was made Prebendary and then Dean of St. Paul's, and lastly Archbishop of Canterbury. He held the primacy for only three years, and died so poor, that his widow—a niece of Oliver Cromwell's—was glad to sell the copyright of his sermons for 2,500 guineas. His style is clear, easy, simple, refined and always correct ; but, in comparison with the great preachers of the generation before him, it appears cold, and even frigid. He deserves, however, to be mentioned as one of the founders—along with Dryden, Halifax, and Temple—of the new



prose: Dryden confessed that he owed much to Tillotson. The following is an average example of his style:—

A state of sin and holiness are not like two ways that are just parted by a line, so that a man may step out of the one full into the other; but they are like two ways that lead to very distant places, and consequently are at a good distance from one another; and the farther a man hath travelled in the one, the farther he is from the other; so that it requires time and pains to pass from the one to the other.

7. **Robert South** (1633—1716), the son of a London merchant, was born at Hackney, in the north of London, and like Dryden and Locke, he became a pupil of Dr. Busby's at Westminster. From thence he passed to Christ Church, Oxford, was elected Student (that is, Fellow), afterwards was made Public Orator of the University, and on taking orders he soon acquired fame as a preacher. He was offered, in his old age, the bishopric of Rochester and the deanery of Westminster; but he declined both. He was a man of great learning, and was noted for his wit. His best known works are his *Sermons*; the most famous of which is that on the "Creation of Man in the Image of God." The following is an extract:—

And first for its noblest faculty, the understanding: it was then sublime, clear, and aspiring, and, as it were, the soul's upper region, lofty and serene, free from the vapours and disturbances of the inferior affections. It was the leading controlling faculty; all the passions wore the colours of reason; it did not so much persuade, as command; it was not consul, but dictator. Discourse was then almost as quick as intuition; it was nimble in proposing, firm in concluding; it could sooner determine than now it can dispute. Like the sun, it had both light and agility; it knew no rest, but in motion; no quiet, but in activity. . . .

Study was not then a duty, night-watchings were needless; the light of reason wanted not the assistance of a candle. This is the doom of fallen man, to labour in the fire, to seek truth *in profundo*, to exhaust his time and impair his health, and perhaps to spin out his days, and himself, into one pitiful, controverted conclusion. . . .

All those arts, rarities, and inventions, which vulgar minds gaze at, the ingenious pursue, and all admire, are but the reliques of an intellect defaced with sin and time. We admire it now, only as antiquaries do a piece of old coin, for the stamp it once bore, and not for those vanishing lineaments and disappearing draughts that remain upon it at present. And certainly that must needs have been very glorious, the decays of which are so admirable. He that is comely when old and decrepit, surely was very beautiful when he was young. An Aristotle was but the rubbish of an Adam, and Athens but the rudiments of Paradise.

(i) "South is especially and eminently masculine. . . . His style is a little, but not much, more antique than that of those among his immediate contemporaries—Tillotson, Temple, Halifax, Dryden, who were the chief heralds of the eighteenth-century manner."—SAINTSBURY.

(ii) "A style clear and English, free from all pedantry, but abounding in colloquial novelties of idiom."—HALLAM.

8. **Thomas Hobbes** (1588—1679), "The Philosopher of Malmesbury," is among the most noted examples of long life, unbroken literary activity of the most varied kind, and successful achievement in the history of English literature. He was born at Malmesbury, in Wiltshire; went at fourteen to Magdalen College, Oxford, and in 1608 became tutor in the Cavendish family (the ancestors of the present Duke of Devonshire), and travelled with three members of it at intervals in France and Italy, where he met and conversed with such men as Descartes<sup>1</sup> and Galileo.<sup>2</sup> On his return home, he frequented upon equal terms the society of Ben Jonson, Bacon, and Lord Herbert of Cherbury (p. 186). His headquarters, however, appear to have been Chatsworth, the beautiful Derbyshire seat of the Dukes of Devonshire. In the year 1641, seeing the rise of those political troubles that were to culminate in the execution of Charles I. in 1649, he went over to Paris, where he was joined by Cowley, Denham, and other Royalists. We find him in 1647 mathematical tutor to the Prince of Wales (afterwards Charles II.). In the year 1651—the year of the Battle of Worcester, which destroyed the Royalist party, and drove Charles II. back into exile—Hobbes published his most famous book, *Leviathan*. This book is in four parts, which treat (i) Of Man; (ii) Of Commonwealth; (iii) Of a Christian Commonwealth; and (iv) Of the Kingdom of Darkness. He also wrote an historical work—*Behemoth*, giving an account of the Civil War. Hobbes likewise completed a translation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* into English verse. As a philosopher Hobbes was the most powerful and the most consistent thinker of his age; and his thought is always profound and yet expressed with great clearness, force, and precision. His style, "of a resolute

<sup>1</sup> Descartes (1596—1650) was a great French philosopher.

<sup>2</sup> Galileo (1564—1642) was a great Italian astronomer. He was kept in confinement by the Inquisition for asserting the truth that our earth is not the centre of the solar system.

simplicity," is terse, rugged, and sometimes hard, yet not without flashes of odd and grotesque humour, combining "vigorous and unembellished diction with biting vernacular." Hobbes lived to the advanced age of ninety-one.

(i) Hobbes seems to have acted for some time as Bacon's secretary, and to have translated several of his books into Latin. Hobbes himself was the last English writer of any rank who wrote his books both in Latin and in English.

(ii) The "Leviathan" stands for the power of the State as against the individual. The "Leviathan" "swallows all—a mortal god, who, like the Deity, governs according to his own will and pleasure."

(iii) Hobbes's translation of Homer has occasionally some good lines, such as those describing the appearance of the young Astyanax when Hector comes to meet his wife, Andromache :

Now Hector met her with her little boy,  
That in the nurse's arms was carried ;  
And like a star upon her bosom lay  
His beautiful and shining golden head.

But much the greater part of the translation is like the following (which refers to Apollo) :—

His bow and quiver both behind him hang,  
The arrows chink as often as he jogs,  
And, as he shot, the bow was heard to twang,  
And first his arrows flew at mules and dogs.

In fact, the translation, though accurate, is, as a piece of literature, an unconsciously ludicrous travesty of Homer.

(iv) "No writer has succeeded in making language a more perfect exponent of thought than it is as employed by Hobbes. . . . In the prime qualities of precision and perspicuity, and also in economy and succinctness, in force and in terseness, it is the very perfection of a merely expository style."—CRAIK.

9. **John Locke** (1632—1704) the son of an attorney, was born at Wrington, in Somersetshire. He was educated at Westminster School, under the famous Dr. Busby, and thence passed to Christ Church, Oxford, of which college he was made a Student. In 1658 he commenced the study of medicine ; but his health prevented his following it as a profession. Yet it was in his medical capacity that, in 1666, he made the acquaintance—an acquaintance which grew into close friendship—of Lord Shaftesbury (the Achitophel of Dryden's great satire). It was believed that he was implicated in one of Shaftesbury's plots ; and he was accordingly

expelled from Christ Church. With his patron he was obliged at one time to take refuge in Holland; but he returned in 1688—the year of the Revolution, in the same vessel that brought over the Prince of Orange, William III. Locke's most famous book is the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690); and one of his most useful works is his *Thoughts on Education* (1693). His style is homely, easy, sober, virile; and it has the high and inestimable merit of exactly suiting the subject he is writing on. The following is an example:—

To write and speak correctly gives a grace, and gains a favourable attention to what one has to say; and since it is English that an English gentleman will have constant use of, that is the language he should chiefly cultivate, and wherein most care should be taken to polish and perfect his style. To speak or write better Latin than English may make a man be talked of; but he would find it more to his purpose to express himself well in his own tongue, that he uses every moment, than to have the vain commendation of others for a very insignificant quality. This I find universally neglected, and no care taken anywhere to improve young men in their own language, that they may thoroughly understand and be masters of it. If any one among us have a facility or purity more than ordinary in his mother tongue, it is owing to chance, or his genius, or anything, rather than to his education, or any care of his teacher.—*Thoughts on Education*.

10. Thomas Fuller (1608—1661) was born in Northamptonshire in the same year as Milton; and he died the year after the Restoration. He was privately educated by his father, the Rector of Aldwinkle, and then sent to Queens' College, Cambridge, at the early age of twelve. At the age of twenty-three his uncle, the Bishop of Salisbury, presented him to the prebendal stall of Netherbury, in that Cathedral, and two years later to the vicarage of Broad Windsor, in Dorsetshire. In 1639 he published a history of the Crusades in four books, under the title of *A Historie of the Holy Warre*, written in an easy and pleasant style, which rapidly attained a popularity as speedily succeeded by neglect. Coming to London in 1640, he was appointed Preacher at the Savoy (in the Strand); his brilliant wit and strange sayings attracted crowds; and the church was thronged to the doors, and eager listeners gathered round the open windows. But his Royalist leanings and his advocacy of a compromise drew upon him the notice of the Long Parliament; oaths and declarations were pressed upon him



to sign; and at length, for "ease of body and comfort of mind," he withdrew to the King's quarters at Oxford. He had always been a moderate Royalist. Appointed Chaplain to the Forces, he became "Preacher Militant" to King Charles's soldiers. As he wandered about the country with the royal army, he collected stories, information, and all kinds of materials for his *Worthies of England*. At the same time he completed his *Holy State*, which appeared in a folio volume in 1642, and reached a third edition before the Restoration. This, with its continuation, *The Profane State*, forms one of the most readable and interesting of the "character" writings of the century. It puts before us the ideals of the Good Wife, the Good Servant, the Good Physician, the Good Sea Captain, etc., generally illustrated by some historical biography in each case—e.g., St. Monica, Eliezer, Paracelsus, Sir Francis Drake; as well as a multitude of weighty reflections on jesting, travelling, tombs, plantations, anger, fancy, books, and so on; all alike marked by a quaint and playful wisdom, strangely foreign to the heated tone of controversy which characterised most of the prose writings of the time.

Some of his books have quaint titles; and the style of them is equally quaint: *Good Thoughts in Bad Times* (1645—one of his best books), *Good Thoughts in Worse Times* (1646—just three years before the execution of Charles I.), *A Pisgah-sight of Palestine* (1650), *Mixt Contemplations in Better Times* (1660). His *Historie of the Worthies of England*, published by his son the year after his death, is his most important work. It gives, under each county, particulars of all remarkable persons, combined with much topographical detail, and is full of local anecdote. A man of sincere and earnest piety, he never could resist a jest; and it may be said with truth that wit, humour, and quaintness formed the woof of his style, while religious feeling is the warp. He possessed a matchless talent for telling a story, and a vivid picturesque way of describing persons, as for example: "Mr. Hooker's voice was low, stature little, gesture none at all, standing stone-still in the pulpit, as if the posture of his body were the emblem of his mind, unmoveable in his opinion. Where his eye was left fixed at the beginning, it was found fixed at the end of

the sermon." His description of a negro as "the image of God cut in ebony" is well known. Speaking of the Pyramids, he says: "The Pyramids themselves, dotting with age, have forgotten the names of their founders." Of a great critic who was also a poet, he remarks: "His own poems are harsh and unsmooth (as if he rather snorted than slept on Parnassus), and they sound better to the brain than to the ear." Of books he says: "It is a vanity to persuade the world one hath much learning, by getting a great library. As soon shall I believe every one is valiant who hath a well-furnished armoury." The following has passed into a proverb: "Moderation is the silken string running through the pearl-chain of all virtues;" and again: "Scoff not at the natural defects of any, which are not in their power to amend. Oh! 'tis cruelty to beat a cripple with his own crutches." He thus compares Shakespeare with Jonson: "Many were the wit-combats betwixt him and Ben Jonson. Which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war. Master Jonson, like the former, was built far higher in learning; solid, but slow, in his performances. Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention."

Wit was of the essence of Fuller's mind; he could not well help expressing himself, when he wrote, in an odd, humorous, quaint, or striking way. "Fuller's," says Craik, "was the sweetest-blooded wit that was ever infused into man or book." His modern successor was Charles Lamb, who probably owed his quaintness of style more to Fuller than to any other writer. Fuller's sentences are never too long, the construction of them is simple; his English is pleasant, homely, and idiomatic, and free from Latinisms. He was to the seventeenth what Sydney Smith was to the nineteenth century.

(i) "His way of telling a story, for its eager liveliness and perpetual running commentary of the narrator happily blended with the narration, is perhaps unequalled."—LAMB.

(ii) "Fuller was incomparably the most sensible, the least prejudiced great man of an age that boasted a galaxy of great men. He is a voluminous writer, and yet in all his numerous volumes, on so many different subjects, it is scarcely too much to say that you will hardly find a page in which some one sentence out of every three does not deserve to be quoted for itself as motto or as maxim."—COLERIDGE.

11. **John Earle** (1601—1665) was born at York, rose to be a Fellow of Merton College, Oxford; became chaplain and tutor to Charles, Prince of Wales, whose exile he shared during the Civil War, and who, when Charles II., rewarded him with the bishopric of Worcester. His chief work is called *Microcosmography; or, a Piece of the World Discovered in Essays and Characters*. He is, like Overbury and Bishop Hall, one of the "character" writers. He writes about the "Downright Scholar," who "cannot speak to a dog in his own dialect"; of the "Mere Young Gentleman of the University," who "of all things, endures not to be mistaken for a scholar"; of the "Pot-poet"; the "Clown," of whom he says: "The plain country fellow is one that manures his ground well, but lets himself lie fallow and untilled. He has reason enough to do his business, and not enough to be idle or melancholy. He seems to have the punishment of Nebuchadnezzar, for his conversation is among beasts, and his talons none of the shortest, only he eats not grass, because he loves not sallets. His hand guides the plough, and the plough his thoughts, and his ditch and land-mark is the very mound of his meditations,"—and so on. Some interest has again revived in Earle's work, which as a picture of manners, apart from its style, is of value to the student of the period.

12. **Sir Thomas Browne** (1605—1682), one of the most important and thoughtful authors in our literature, was born in Cheapside, London, and educated at Winchester School and at Pembroke College, Oxford. After travelling in Ireland, France, and Italy, he took the degree of Doctor of Medicine at the famous University of Leyden. He settled as a medical practitioner in Norwich, was made Fellow of the College of Physicians in 1665, and knighted by Charles II. on the occasion of his paying a visit to Norwich in 1671. His most famous books are *Religio Medici* (the Religion of a Physician), *Pseudodoxia*<sup>1</sup> *Epidemica* (Vulgar or Common Errors), and *Hydriotaphia* (or Urn Burial). Sir Thomas Browne was one of the great Latinisers of English style, and was fonder of Latin words than even Dr. Johnson himself. He has no hesitation about using them—*dilucidate*, *amphiate*, *indigitate*, *excitate*,

<sup>1</sup> *Pseudodoxia*, from two Greek words *pseudos* (falsity) and *doxa* (opinion).

*ferruginous*, and many other such. His style is full, flowing, rich in illustrations, eloquent, ornate, and sometimes even fantastic. His rich and expressive vocabulary was mostly borrowed from the classical languages—especially from Latin; but, as Coleridge says, he “was often truly great and magnificent in his style and diction, though, doubtless, too often big, stiff, and *hyper-Latinistic*.”

In his *Vulgar Errors* he confutes such popular views as that a diamond is softened by the blood of a goat; that an elephant has no joints; that storks will only live in republics and free states; that men weigh heavier before meat than after, etc.

The following is a good example of Browne's style:—

Now since these dead bones have already outlasted the living ones of Methuselah, and in a yard underground, and thin walls of clay, out-worn all the strong and specious buildings above it; and quietly rested under the drums and tramlings of three conquests: what prince can promise such diuturnity unto his relicks, or might not gladly say:—

Sic ego componi versus in ossa velim?

Time, which antiquates antiquities, and hath an art to make dust of all things, hath yet spared these minor monuments. In vain we hope to be known by open and visible conservatories, when to be unknown was the means of their continuation, and obscurity their protection. . . .

Oblivion is not to be hired. The greater part must be content to be as though they had not been, to be found in the register of God, not in the record of man. Twenty-seven names make up the first story before the flood, and the recorded names ever since contain not one living century. The number of the dead long exceedeth all that shall live. The night of time far surpasseth the day, and who knows when was the equinox? Every hour adds unto that current arithmetick, which scarce stands one moment. And since death must be the *Lucina* of life, and even Pagans could doubt, whether thus to live were to die; since our longest sun sets at right descensions, and makes but winter arches, and therefore it cannot be long before we lie down in darkness, and have our light in ashes; since the brother of death daily haunts us with dying mementoes, and time that grows old in itself, bids us hope no long duration;—diuturnity is a dream and folly of expectation.—*Hydriotaphia*.

“The passage beginning ‘Now since these dead bones’ has rung in the ears of some eight generations as the very and unsurpassable Dead March of English prose.”—SAINTSBURY.

13. **Izaak Walton** (1593—1683) is one of the pleasantest and friendliest writers in the language. It is to him that we owe the usual name for the sport of angling—“the gentle craft.” He was born at Stafford; migrated to London, and carried on the trade of hosier,



linen-draper, and seamster. He was twice married—the first time to a relation of Archbishop Cranmer, the second to a half-sister of Dr. Ken, Bishop of Bath and Wells. In the latter part of his life he resided at Winchester, where he died at the good old age of ninety. His chief work is *The Complete Angler*, a book full of charming pictures of country life and rural scenery. It does not display literary art; it is rather the pleasant conversation of a charming, kindly, and loquacious old gentleman. The simplicity, the sweet, natural grace of the style, have given this book a permanent place in our literature. The book is in the form of a dialogue; and the three speakers are Piscator (Fisher), Venator (Hunter) and Auceps (Falconer or Fowler). He also wrote five short *Lives* of his friends Donne, Wotton,<sup>1</sup> Hooker, Herbert, and Sanderson.<sup>2</sup>

14. **Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon** (1608—1674), was born of an old Cheshire family at Dinton, Wiltshire, in the same year as John Milton; and their deaths also occurred in the same year. He was sent to Oxford at the very early age of twelve, where he remained only a year, and was then entered of the Middle Temple, and began the study of law. In the year 1640 he took his seat in the Long Parliament as member for the borough of Saltash (in Cornwall) and was made Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1643. The Parliamentary party at first obtained his support; but when the House of Commons passed a bill to prevent the dissolution of Parliament except with its own consent, he revolted against a proceeding so unconstitutional, joined the royal cause, adhered to it, and for several years was one of Charles I.'s principal advisers. After the execution of Charles I. in 1649, he represented the cause of the royal house at several foreign courts. He was also chief adviser and minister to the Prince of Wales in his exile. After the Restoration in 1660, Edward Hyde was made Lord High Chancellor, and created Earl of Clarendon. Cabal after cabal, intrigue after intrigue was formed against him, until at length he was compelled to resign the Great Seal, and was accused of high treason by

<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry Wotton is the author of the famous definition of an ambassador—"an honest man sent to lie abroad for the good of his country." He was Provost of Eton College.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Sanderson (1587—1663), Bishop of Lincoln, and an eminent divine.

the House of Commons. The impeachment failed, but he received from Charles II. (at his own request) a royal command to withdraw from the kingdom. He never saw England again, but died at Rouen in 1674. His greatest work is the *History of the Great Rebellion*—a work he could write with the greater ease, in that he was personally acquainted with the chief actors on both sides. This book is chiefly famous for the skill displayed in the drawing of personal character of the friends, officials, and others with whom he came in close contact during the troubled periods of his career. The depicting of "character types" was a favourite literary exercise of Clarendon's time; hence in England we find Overbury, Earle, and Bishop Hall writing "characters"; and La Bruyère and others in France. Clarendon, however, reaches a high standard of excellence in personal descriptions: his characters of Hampden, Lord Falkland, Charles I., Cromwell, and others are remarkable for their skill in portraiture, their incisiveness, and their firm delicacy in delineation. His sentences are in general much too long and often heavy and long-winded; his syntax is sometimes awkward, and he cared little for rhythm—and less for punctuation. But the clearness and vividness of his descriptions—of a battle, of a debate in the House—more than make up for all such shortcomings; while the pervading tone is one "of almost tragic dignity."

(i) Clarendon's daughter married the Duke of York (afterwards James II.); and he thus became the grandfather of two Queens of England—Anne and Mary (wife of William of Orange).

(ii) When studying law in London, he mixed much in the society of men like Lord Falkland, Selden, Waller, and Chillingworth. He says: "I never was so proud or thought myself so good a man, as when I was the worst man in the company."

#### THE DEATH OF STRAFFORD.

During these perplexities, the Earl of Strafford, taking notice of the straits the King was in, the rage of the people still increasing (from whence he might expect a certain outrage and ruin), how constant soever the King continued to him; and, it may be, knowing of an undertaking (for such an undertaking there was, by a great person, who had then a command in the Tower, "that if the King

refused to pass the bill, to free the kingdom from the hazard it seemed to be in, he would cause his head to be stricken off in the Tower"), writ a most pathetic letter to the King, full of acknowledgment of his favours; but lively presenting "the dangers, which threatened himself and his posterity, by his obstinacy in those favours"; and therefore by many arguments conjuring him "no longer to defer his assent to the bill, that so his death might free the kingdom from the many troubles it apprehended." . . . All things being thus transacted, to conclude the fate of this great person, he was on the twelfth day of May brought from the Tower of London (where he had been a prisoner near six months) to the scaffold on Tower Hill; where, with a composed, undaunted courage, he told the people, "he was come thither to satisfy them with his head; but that he much feared, the reformation which was begun in blood would not prove so fortunate to the kingdom, as they expected, and he wished": and after great expressions "of his devotion to the Church of England, and the Protestant religion established by law, and professed in that church; of his loyalty to the King, and affection to the peace and welfare of the kingdom"; with marvellous tranquillity of mind, he delivered his head to the block, where it was severed from his body at a blow; many of the standers by, who had not been over charitable to him in his life, being much affected with the courage and Christianity of his death.

15. **Sir William Temple** (1628—1698) was born in London, the son of an eminent lawyer, who was Master of the Rolls in Ireland. He entered Emmanuel College, Cambridge, but left without taking his degree, and went abroad to make what was known as the "Grand Tour." The main business of his life was diplomacy, and the Triple Alliance—between England, Holland, and Sweden—concluded at The Hague in 1668, was largely the work of Temple. In 1681 he retired from all public affairs, and lived at Sheen and at Moor Park, in Surrey, where Swift acted for some time as his secretary. He was a personal friend of William III., who constantly sought his advice. As a writer, he is best known by his *Essays*. He would find a place in our literature were it only from his connection with Swift; but his

own position is due to the fact that he, along with Dryden and Halifax, may be regarded as one of the founders of modern English prose. Temple's style is the style of a gentleman, plain but elegant—a style of polished sentences and well-balanced clauses, such as the following :—

All excessive and outrageous grief or lamentation was accounted among the ancient Christians, to have something heathenish ; and, among the civil nations of old, to have something barbarous : and therefore it has been the care of the first to moderate it by their precepts, and of the latter to restrain it by their laws.

The above sentence, it is clear, has carefully and neatly balanced clauses ; and the whole has a certain easy and yet not undignified march. The following sentence is a little more involved—perhaps too much so :—

The talent of gaining riches I ever despised, as observing it to belong to the most despicable men in other kinds : and I had the occasions of it so often in my day, if I would have made use of them, that I grew to disdain them, as a man does meat that he has always before him.

Temple's most noted sentence is that at the close of his *Essay on Poetry* :—

When all is done, human life is, at the greatest and the best, but like a froward child, that must be played with and humoured a little to keep it quiet till it falls asleep, and then the care is over.

16. **George Savile**, Marquis of Halifax (1633—1695), was the son of an ancient Yorkshire family. Living in a time full of troubles, changes, and revolutions, he found it difficult to acquire a character for what is called consistency. He supported the measures of the King's party (the party of Charles II.), and he supported the measures of the Opposition—in either case on their merits ; he was personally attached to the House of Stuart, but he was hostile to their religion ; he voted against the bill for excluding the Duke of York from the throne, but he greatly disliked the Duke of York's policy. Hence he obtained the reputation of a "Trimmer" ; but he was a trimmer of the honest kind : "every faction in the day of its insolent and vindictive triumph incurred his censure ; and every faction when vanquished and persecuted found in him a protector." In 1668 he was raised to the peerage as Baron Savile and Viscount Halifax ; in 1682 he was created Marquis of Halifax



and Lord Privy Seal. He was one of the men who helped to drive James II. from the throne : and in the "Convention Parliament" which met in 1689 (the year after the landing of William III.), he was made Speaker of the House of Lords. In 1690 he withdrew entirely from public business ; and on his death in 1695, he was buried in Westminster Abbey. He is worthy of a place in the history of our literature as one of the men who, with Dryden and Temple, as we have said, introduced what is called "the modern prose style." His best known work is *The Character of a Trimmer*, from which the following is an extract :—

This convenient word, *Trimmer*, signifies no more than this, that if men are together in a boat, and one part of the company would weigh it down on one side, another would make it lean as much to the contrary : it happens that there is a third opinion of those who conceive it would do as well if the boat went even without endangering the passengers. Now, 'tis hard to imagine by what figure in language, or by what rule in sense, this comes to be a fault, and it is much more a wonder it should be thought a heresy.

Nothing can be clearer than this : it is the talk of a plain man to plain men, with perhaps a little more point and force than usual.

17. **John Dryden** (1631—1700), is dealt with on p. 252. It is sufficient, at this point, to classify him as one of those who began to write a clear, a flexible, and a modern prose. He elaborated a prose suited to the use of every day ; made it fit for the essay and the pamphlet, for history, criticism, or for narrative. He avoided long sentences, clumsy interpolations, elaborately qualifying statements, learned allusions and quotations ; he himself had learned from, and profited much by, the lucidity and the rhythmic movement of good French prose. The best examples of Dryden's prose work are to be found in his *Essay of Dramatic Poetry*, and his prefaces and dedications. The style of these is strong, terse, virile ; entirely free from mannerism—always clear and precise in the use of words. For a manly plainness and homeliness of expression, Dryden may be bracketed with Bunyan, Swift, and Defoe. Russell Lowell says of it : "English prose is indebted to Dryden for having freed it from the cloister of pedantry. He, more than any other single writer, contributed, as well by precept as by example, to give it suppleness of movement and the easier air of the modern world. His own style, juicy with proverbial phrases,

has that familiar dignity so hard to attain." Sir Walter Scott says: "The prose of Dryden may rank with the best in the English language. It is no less of his own formation than his versification; is equally spirited and equally harmonious." The following passage on Shakespeare from his *Essay* will illustrate his style:—

He was the man who, of all modern and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them, not laboriously, but luckily; when he describes any thing, you more than see it: you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat, insipid; his comic wit degenerating into clenches,<sup>1</sup> his serious swelling into bombast. But he is always great, when some great occasion is presented to him.

18. **Abraham Cowley** (1618—1667), whose poetry has been dealt with (p. 203), is best seen as a man in his *Essays*. We have eleven of these, which are written in a calm and contemplative spirit, with all the polished and finished style of a true artist, and he takes his place beside Addison and Goldsmith as a master in this particular form of prose writing. From Cowley's *Essays* we get a good insight to the character of the man, and we can readily understand the affection he inspired in his friends, and why Charles II. said of him that he had not left behind him a better man in England. The best of his poetry is the verse mixed with the *Essays*; this is of a strong classical flavour, many of the lines being translations and adaptations, in which he shows a singular power and deftness in the use of the English tongue. He brings a wide learning to bear in illustrating and illuminating his thoughts and ideas, the product of an eminently sane mind, which formulated for itself a philosophy of life and consistently pursued it. Quitting the court and city life, he retired, first to Barn Elms and afterwards to Chertsey, where he devoted himself to a rural life, and wrote on agriculture, solitude, shortness of life, and other such subjects. But he did not find his ideal of happiness in the retirement he had so long desired. Speaking of himself,

<sup>1</sup> Clenches are puns or plays on words.

he says: "I never then proposed to myself any other advantage from his Majesty's happy restoration, but the getting into some moderately convenient retreat in the country, which I thought in that case I might easily have compassed, as well as some others, with no greater probabilities or pretences have arrived to extraordinary fortunes." He caught a cold by staying too long in the fields with his labourers, and died a fortnight afterwards. He has many wise sayings, of which the following are examples:—

If we engage into a large acquaintance and various familiarities, we set open our gates to the invaders of most of our time: we expose our life to a Quotidian Ague of frigid impertinences, which would make a wise man tremble to think of.

There's no fooling with life when it is once turned beyond forty. The seeking for a fortune then is but a desperate after-game; it is a hundred to one if a man fling two sixes, and recover all.

Man is to man all kind of beasts—a fawning dog, a roaring lion, a thieving fox, a robbing wolf, a dissembling crocodile, a treacherous decoy, and a rapacious vulture.

19. **John Evelyn** (1620—1706) was educated at Oxford and called to the Bar. He travelled on the Continent during the first few years of the Commonwealth; but he returned to England in 1652, and having ample means, he settled at Sayes Court, near Deptford, and devoted himself to intellectual pursuits, to horticulture, and landscape gardening. His grounds became celebrated for the successful rearing of foreign plants. His house was occupied by Peter the Great and his retinue, who were "right nasty," as the servant of Evelyn said in writing to him. Evelyn took an active part in public affairs, and also wrote on a great variety of subjects, such as forest trees, the earth, and medals, and so on. He acted as Commissioner for the sick and wounded in the Dutch war, and his letters on the condition of the men, the laxity of officials, and the difficulty of getting money from the Crown betray a scandalous state of affairs. Evelyn's fame, however, rests on his *Diary*, and it is interesting to note that he was a friend of Pepys, and neither knew that the other was keeping a like record. Evelyn commenced his *Diary* in 1641, and continued it to within a few weeks of his death in 1706, so that it covers a period of sixty-five years. Evelyn's official duties kept him in London during the Plague, and he was an eye-witness of its ravages, also of those

of the Great Fire, of which he gives a graphic description. The following extract is a good example of his style:—

*January 24th, 1684.*—The frost continuing more and more severe, the Thames before London was still planted with boothes in formal streetes, all sorts of trades and shops furnish'd and full of commodities, even to a printing-presse, where the people and ladyes tooke a fancy to have their names printed, and the day and yeare set down when printed on the Thames; this humour tooke so universally, that 'twas estimated the printer gain'd £5 a day, for printing a line only, at sixpence a name, besides what he got by ballads, etc. Coaches piled from Westminster to the Temple, and from several other staires to and fro, as in the streetes, sleds, sliding with skates, a bull-baiting, horse and coach races, puppet plays and interludes, cookes and tipling places, so that it seem'd to be a bacchanalian triumph, or carnival on the water, while it was a severe judgment on the land, the trees not only splitting as if lightning-struck, but men and cattle perishing in divers places, and the very seas so lock'd up with ice, that no vessels could stir out or come in. The fowles, fish, and birds, and all our exotic plants and greenes universally perishing. Many parkes of deer were destroyed, and all sorts of fuell so deare that there were greate contributions to preserve the poore alive.

20. **Samuel Pepys** (1633—1703) was of a good family, but his father had set up business as a tailor in London. The boy was educated at St. Paul's School, from whence he passed to Magdalen College, Cambridge. His father was related to Sir Edward Montagu (Earl of Sandwich), who commanded the fleet that brought back Charles II. to England. At the age of twenty-three Samuel Pepys married a young and beautiful girl of fifteen, but Montagu took the rash couple into his house and appointed Pepys his secretary. Through his relative's good offices he obtained a clerkship in the Navy, and was subsequently appointed Secretary to the Admiralty. He made a most able and upright official, and was highly honoured in London public life. It was an age of the grossest corruption in state affairs, and Pepys set himself sedulously to check abuses, especially in the matter of all contracts for the Navy.

It is not for this, however, that his name is noted; his reputation, and that of a peculiar kind, rests upon his *Diary*, which lay unread for over two hundred years after his death. It was written in a kind of cypher, or shorthand, and was deciphered by John Smith, a student at Cambridge and afterwards Rector of Baldock, in Hertfordshire, and published by Lord Braybrooke



in 1825, with considerable omissions. Several editions have since appeared, the latest in 1895-6 in eight volumes by Mr. H. B. Wheatley. The *Diary* covers a period of ten years (1660-69) and as Pepys was an eye-witness of the Plague and Fire of London, interesting accounts are given of these terrible visitations. The *Diary* is perhaps the most extraordinary ever penned, and it is difficult to determine for what purpose the writer intended it, for it never could have been meant for any eye except his own. All the little weaknesses, foibles, and what one may call petty gossip of himself are here recorded, which, if taken without qualifications and proper consideration, give an entirely erroneous opinion of the writer. Here he is revealed with all his imperfections; and few, if any, characters would bear without loss such self-revelations. In all this Pepys was manifestly unfair to himself. He betrays his meanness, his avariciousness, his worst side in domestic life, his vanity and his fondness for clothes. That he could be generous we have ample evidence. But we have little, in the sum total, of the able and trusted official, of the qualities of the man who was a friend of many of the ablest and best men of his day, of Pepys the President of the Royal Society and the Master of Trinity House. His interests were manifold: his social instincts were particularly strong, and he mixed with all sorts and conditions of men. He was a great patron of the theatre, a reader and collector of books, pictures, and curios, and he bequeathed his fine library to Magdalen College, Cambridge, where it remains, as it was in its original condition, to the present day.

The *Diary* is not only valuable as a personal account, but it throws much light on the manners of the time, and on the official affairs with which Pepys was more immediately connected. The following passage is taken from his description of the Great Fire:—

*September 2nd, 1666.*—Some of our maids sitting up late last night to get things ready against our feast to-day, Jane called us up about three in the morning, to tell us of a great fire they saw in the City. So I rose, and slipped on my night-gown,<sup>1</sup> and went to her window; and thought it to be on the back-side of Marke-lane at the farthest, but being unused to such fires as followed, I thought it far enough off; and so went to bed again, and to sleep. About seven rose again to dress myself,

<sup>1</sup> Night-gown = dressing-gown. Cf. *Macbeth* ii. 2, 70; v. 1, 5.

and there looked out at the window, and saw the fire not so much as it was, and further off. So to my closet to set things to rights, after yesterday's cleaning. By-and-by Jane comes and tells me that she hears that above 300 houses have been burned down to-night by the fire we saw, and that it is now burning down all Fish Street, by London Bridge. So I made myself ready presently, and walked to the Tower, and there got up upon one of the high places, Sir J. Robinson's little son going up with me; and there I did see the houses at that end of the bridge all on fire, and an infinite great fire on this and the other side the end of the bridge; which, among other people, did trouble me for poor little Michell and our Sarah on the bridge. So down with my heart full of trouble to the Lieutenant of the Tower, who tells me that it began this morning in the King's baker's house in Pudding Lane, and that it hath burned down St. Magnus's Church and most part of Fish-street already. So I down to the water-side, and there got a boat, and through bridge, and there saw a lamentable fire.

## CHAPTER XIV.

---

### BUTLER, DRYDEN, AND THE RESTORATION DRAMA.

1. Samuel Butler (1612—1680).—The great struggle of the seventeenth century gave birth to much satirical writing, and on the Royalist side the most noted name is that of Samuel Butler. The first part of his *Hudibras*, which covers the Puritan party with ridicule, appeared in 1662, soon after the Restoration of Charles II. The author was born at Strensham, in Worcestershire, the son of a yeoman-farmer, who held his own land and worked it; and he seems to have acted as secretary or clerk to various persons, among others to the Countess of Kent, in whose house he met the celebrated John Selden. He was also secretary to Sir Samuel Luke, a Puritan colonel, and scout-master for Bedfordshire, who is said to have been the original of *Hudibras*. In 1660, Butler was appointed secretary to the Earl of Carbury, Lord President of Wales, who rewarded his services by making him steward of Ludlow Castle, where Milton's *Comus* had been performed some thirty years before. His marriage to a "widow with means" proved a failure; for though he lived comfortably on his wife's jointure for a time, the money was eventually lost on worthless securities. In 1662 the first part of his chief work—*Hudibras*—was published in London, the second part in 1663, and the third part not till 1678. Two years after, Butler died, and was buried in the churchyard of St. Paul's, Covent Garden. In 1721 a monument to Butler was erected in Westminster Abbey by John Barber, Lord Mayor of London.

It was in the house of Sir Samuel Luke, a scout-master during the Civil War, that Butler met a number of Puritans—soldiers and others; and

their stiff and affected manners, odd dress, and fanatical opinions supplied him with material for his poems. It was these men who promoted legislation against walking in the fields on Sundays, against dancing round the maypole, and similar relaxations.

2. **Hudibras.**—This poem may be fairly described as an immense lampoon on the characters and doings of the Puritans. The idea of Sir Hudibras going about “a-colonelling” with his Squire Ralph is copied from Don Quixote and Sancho Panza; but this is the only thing copied in the whole poem. It is written in octosyllabic metre—that is, in iambic tetrameter. The appearance, the character, the learning of the Knight are well described in the witty doggerel of the poem:—

A wight he was whose very sight would  
Entitle him mirror of knighthood. . . .  
His tawny beard was th’ equal grace  
Both of his wisdom and his face;  
In cut and dye so like a tile,  
A sudden view it would beguile.

Besides, ’tis known he could speak Greek  
As naturally as pigs squeak;  
That Latin was no more difficile  
Than to a black-bird ’tis to whistle.

For his religion, it was fit  
To match his learning and his wit.  
’Twas Presbyterian true blue;  
For he was of that stubborn crew  
Of errant saints, whom all men grant  
To be the true church militant:  
Such as do build their faith upon  
The holy text of pike and gun;  
Decide all controversies by  
Infallible artillery;  
And prove their doctrine orthodox  
By apostolic blows and knocks;  
Call fire, and sword, and desolation  
A godly thorough reformation,  
Which always must be carried on,  
And still be doing, never done;  
As if religion were intended  
For nothing else but to be mended.

The whole poem is full of wit, drollery, absurdity, learning, thought, and the most felicitous illustrations. He has many odd and well-known double rimes, such as:—



And pulpit, drum ecclesiastic,  
Was beat with fist, instead of a stick.  
Then did Sir Knight abandon dwelling  
And out he rode a colonelling.

The following is a good specimen of his power of ludicrous illustration:—

The sun had long since in the lap  
Of Thetis taken out his nap,  
And, like a lobster boiled, the morn  
From black to red began to turn.

The lines on Night are really poetical, and have nothing in them of the grotesque:—

The sun grew low, and left the skies,  
Put down, some write, by ladies' eyes.  
The moon pulled off her veil of light  
That hides her face by day from sight  
—Mysterious veil, of brightness made  
That's both her lustre and her shade!

His wise saws and thoughtful apophthegms have been frequently quoted; in fact, Butler has been as much drawn upon for apposite quotations as almost any other poet:—

For rhyme, the rudder is of verses  
With which, like ships, they steer their courses.

Those that write in rhyme still make  
The one verse for the other's sake.

Opinion governs all mankind  
Like the blind's leading of the blind.

For loyalty is still the same,  
Whether it win or lose the game;  
True as the dial to the sun,  
Altho' it be not shined upon.

In Rome no Temple was so low  
As that of Honour—built to show  
How humble honour ought to be,  
Though there 'twas all authority.

He that complies against his will  
Is of his own opinion still.

Doubtless the pleasure is as great  
Of being cheated as to cheat.

(i) "The verse of Butler is scorn made metrical."—SAINTSBURY.

(ii) King Charles II. carried a copy of *Hudibras* in his pocket—was always reading it and always quoting it.

‘He never ate, nor drank, nor slept,  
But *Hudibras* still near him kept,”

says Butler himself.

3. **John Dryden** (1631—1700).—Dryden was the greatest writer (if we except Milton), both in verse and in prose, of the latter half of the seventeenth century, and one of the greatest satirists in any language. He has been called “the greatest writer of a little age”; but the antithesis loses in truth what it seems to gain in smartness. The “school of good sense” which began to grow up about the middle of the seventeenth century, and which numbered among its disciples such men as Waller, Davenant, Denham, and Cowley, had its culmination in the works of John Dryden. He was born at Aldwinkle, in Northamptonshire, in 1631, and educated under the famous Dr. Busby, who thought highly of his talents and diligence, and seems to have taken great pains with him. Dryden, like Milton, was well read in the Latin classics. He had read probably all the works of Horace, Juvenal, Virgil, and Ovid; and his mind was stored with their images and their phrases. Like Milton, he had not been in any hurry to begin the work of a profession: on the contrary, he spent some years at Cambridge after taking his degree; and it is probable that he gave these years to steady reading as a preparation for his work in literature. Again, like Milton, he was punished by the University authorities for some irregularity and for contumacy.

4. **His Early Poems.**—Dryden’s earliest attempt at poetry—and it was made while still at Westminster School—consisted of some lines on the death by small-pox of another Westminster boy, Lord Hastings. The lines are full of the crude conceits which were so welcome to that age. He says, among other absurd things:

Each little pimple had a tear in it,  
To wail the fault its rising did commit.

The *Heroic Stanzas to the Memory of Oliver Cromwell* was the first poem of any merit which he published. He was then twenty-seven. Both sides of his house—the Drydens and the Pickerings—were Puritan and Parliamentary; and young Dryden naturally

admired the heroic qualities of Cromwell. The poem is written in quatrains, with five beats in each line.

Swift and resistless through the land he passed,  
Like that bold Greek who did the East subdue,  
And made to battle such heroic haste,  
As if on wings of victory he flew.

In 1660 he produced his poem *Astraea Redux*—verses on the return to the throne of Charles II:—

Methinks I see those crowds on Dover's strand,  
Who in their haste to welcome you to land  
Choked up the beach with their still-growing store  
And made a wilder torrent on the shore:  
How shall I speak of that triumphant day,  
When you renewed the expiring pomp of May?

In 1667 he published his *Annus Mirabilis* (the Year of Wonders), and it tells the story of the war with the Dutch and the fire of London. As the poem of a young man, it is full of fire, spirit, and energy; and the presence of these qualities are the more remarkable, in that he had to contend against the weight and drag of a difficult and unaccommodating metre. The verse in which this poem is written is a quatrain of iambic pentameters, riming alternately:—

Such was the rise of this prodigious fire,  
Which, in mean buildings first obscurely bred,  
From thence did soon to open streets aspire,  
And straight to palaces and temples spread.

For about the next twenty years Dryden laboured almost exclusively as a writer of plays.

5. **His Dramas.**—During the Commonwealth and the Protectorate, all the theatres were closed; plays had almost ceased to be written, and dramatic literature was out of favour. The Restoration brought with it a complete change. Play-writing now became the most fashionable of literary occupations; and, as it was also the most lucrative, Dryden set to work on the drama, and wrote altogether twenty-seven plays. His first play, *The Wild Gallant*, was published in 1663, but it was a decided failure. In *The Indian Emperor*, which appeared in 1665, Dryden adopted the French plan of employing rime in the speeches. *The Conquest of Granada* was another play of the same kind—the kind called “heroic plays.”

*The Spanish Friar*, the serious portions written in blank verse, and the comic scenes in prose, is considered to be his best comedy.

Perhaps the best of his dramas is *The Conquest of Granada*—a drama in two parts which no one now reads, but which many unconsciously quote. The following couplets from the Second Part are well known :—

A blush remains in a forgiven face ;  
It wears the silent tokens of disgrace :  
Forgiveness to the injured does belong ;  
But they ne'er pardon who have done the wrong.

And the melancholy and pessimistic lines from *Aurengzebe* are frequently quoted :—

When I consider life, 'tis all a cheat,  
Yet, fooled with hope, men favour the deceit,  
Trust on, and think to-morrow will repay :  
To-morrow's falser than the former day ;  
Lies worse ; and, while it says, we shall be blest  
With some new joys, cuts off what we possess. . .  
I'm tired with waiting for this chymic gold  
Which fools us young and beggars us when old.

So far as literature is concerned, the main value of Dryden's plays is to be found, not in the plays themselves, but in his prefaces to them—prefaces written in a style and critical spirit which may be said to mark the inauguration of a new prose, and a new standard of poetic criticism in our literature. In the history of the growth of Dryden's poetical mind, his plays must also be regarded as a long series of exercises in metrical composition. But these exercises gave him "an unmatched skill in versification," and made him easily the first verse writer of his time.

6. **His Satires.**—For many years Dryden had devoted himself almost exclusively to the composition of rimed dramatic works, and he now turned to the writing of satires and didactic poems. The best of these are *Absalom and Achitophel*, *The Medal*, *MacFlecknoe*, *Religio Laici*, and *The Hind and the Panther*. They are the best of their kind in English ; and a great critic adds that "it may almost be said that there is nothing better in any other literary language." In these poems Dryden displays at its highest his enormous power of argumentative exposition ; the exercise of this power is infrequent in



English literature, but the best modern example is Matthew Arnold's *Empedocles on Etna*. Of the satires, the noblest and most powerful is his *Absalom and Achitophel*, the first part of which was published in November, 1681, about a week before the grand jury for the city of London threw out the bill of indictment for high treason against the Earl of Shaftesbury. It was a time when party spirit was at its highest and hottest in London and other parts of England; and the great influence of this poem told in favour of the policy of Charles II., and against those who wished to exclude the Duke of York from the succession. The two most powerfully drawn characters in this poem are those of Achitophel (Lord Shaftesbury) and Zimri (George Villiers, the second Duke of Buckingham).

Of these the false Achitophel was first,  
A name to all succeeding ages curst :  
For close designs and crooked counsels fit,  
Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit,  
Restless, unfixed in principles and place,  
In power unpleased, impatient of disgrace ;  
A fiery soul which, working out its way,  
Fretted the pigmy body to decay,  
And o'er-informed the tenement of clay.  
A daring pilot in extremity,  
Pleased with the danger when the waves went high,  
He sought the storms ; but, for a calm unfit,  
Would steer too nigh the sands to boast his wit,  
Great wits are sure to madness near allied,  
And thin partitions do their bounds divide.

Some of their chiefs were princes of the land ;  
In the first rank of these did Zimri stand,  
A man so various that he seemed to be  
Not one, but all mankind's epitome :  
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,  
Was everything by starts, and nothing long ;  
But, in the course of one revolving moon  
Was chymist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon. . . .  
So over-violent or over-civil,  
That every man with him was God or Devil.  
In squandering wealth was his peculiar art,  
Nothing went unrewarded but desert.

On his acquittal the Earl of Shaftesbury had a medal struck with the legend *Lactamur* (We rejoice). This called out from Dryden a severe satire called *The Medal*. There were

many metrical replies to Dryden's poem, the most bitter of which was *The Medal of John Bayes*,<sup>1</sup> by Thomas Shadwell—a poem which is “perhaps the most scurrilous piece of ribaldry which has ever got itself quoted in English literature.” Shadwell's performance was not only a foul attack on private character, it was a piece of base ingratitude to Dryden, who had shown many kindnesses to the writer. Dryden takes a terrible revenge in *MacFlecknoe*, in which Shadwell is supposed to succeed Flecknoe on the throne of dulness and stupidity. This, the bitterest of all his satires, appeared in 1682. Dryden pretends that Shadwell is the son of Flecknoe, “an Irish priest who had died not long before, after writing a little good verse and a great deal of bad.”

Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,  
Mature in dulness from his tender years;  
Shadwell alone of all my sons is he  
Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.

In the end of the same year appeared the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel*, in which Shadwell is once more the object of a still fiercer onslaught in the character of Og. Elkanah Settle (the poet of the City of London) is also furiously assailed in the character of Doeg. The poem was written by Nahum Tate<sup>2</sup> with Dryden's assistance.

The *Religio Laici* (the Religion of a Layman—1682), has been described as “a half-way house between Protestantism and the religion of the Roman Catholic”; and in *The Hind and the Panther*, published in 1687, Dryden sets forth, in skilful and vigorous verse, the various arguments which had induced him to leave the Church of England and to join the Church of Rome. The poem is written in the form of a fable—after the pattern of the mediaeval fable of Reynard the Fox—and the Hind represents the Church of Rome, the Panther the Anglican Church, while the various bodies of Nonconformists are typified by “the Bear, the Boar, and every savage name.”

7. *Odes, Translations, and Fables*.—Of his *Odes*, the finest are the *Ode to the Memory of Mrs. Anne Killigrew* and the second

<sup>1</sup> *Bayes*—a passing allusion to the fact that Dryden was then Poet Laureate.

<sup>2</sup> Nahum Tate is well known for the production in partnership with Brady of a metrical version of the Psalms.

ode in honour of St. Cecilia, which is generally known as *Alexander's Feast*. The first stanza of the former has been pronounced "absolutely faultless and incapable of improvement." There are other passages in this ode which mark it as a classic; such are the lines:—

Thou hast no dross to purge from thy rich ore :  
Nor can thy soul a fairer mansion find  
Than was the beauteous frame she left behind :  
Return, to fill or mend the choir of thy celestial kind !

And the last stanza rises to a noble strain :—

When in mid-air the golden trump shall sound,  
To raise the nations under ground ;  
When in the Valley of Jehoshaphat  
The judging God shall close the Book of Fate,  
And then the last assizes keep  
For those who wake and those who sleep. . . .  
The sacred poets first shall hear the sound,  
And foremost from the tomb shall bound,  
For they are covered with the lightest ground ;  
And straight, with inborn vigour, on the wing,  
Like mounting larks, to the new morning sing.  
There thou, sweet saint, before the choir shalt go,  
As harbinger of Heaven, the way to show,  
The way which thou so well hast learned below.

Some years after he was sixty, Dryden began a series of translations from the best works of the Latin poets—Horace, Juvenal, and Persius. In his translations from Horace there is a good deal more of Dryden's spirit and style than of Horace's:—

Happy the man, and happy he alone,  
He who can call to-day his own ;  
He who, secure within, can say,  
To-morrow do thy worst, for I have lived to-day ;  
Be fair or foul, or rain or shine,  
The joys I have possessed, in spite of fate, are mine ;  
Not heaven itself upon the past has power,  
But what has been has been, and I have had my hour.

Dryden's translation of Juvenal is still regarded as the standard verse translation of that Roman poet. In 1694 Dryden commenced his translation of Virgil, and it occupied the larger part of three years. This translation is not made in the spirit of Virgil: the version wants the tranquillity, the finish, and the delicacy of touch of the great original. It is probable that

Dryden would have succeeded better as a translator of Homer; as Virgil would have been better translated by Pope.

At the age of sixty-seven, Dryden (who had been deprived by the Revolution of 1688 of his offices of poet laureate and historiographer royal, and of his place in the customs) found himself obliged to work still harder for a living; and he now struck upon an entirely new literary vein. This was to render into seventeenth-century English the old stories and fables which had long amused the leisure of Europe, and which he found in Ovid, in Chaucer, in Boccaccio. The book was published under the title of *Fables*. The payment for it amounted to "sixpence a line"; in all, £300. The story of *Theodore and Honoria* (from Boccaccio) is placed "at the head of all the poetry of the school of which Dryden was a master."

8. **Characteristics.**—The two chief peculiarities in Dryden's verse are his employment of triplet rimes and his use of the Alexandrine. In *The Hind and the Panther* the triplet occurs often—too often, in fact:—

For courtesies, though undeserved and great,  
No gratitude in felon-minds beget;  
As tribute to his wit, the churl receives the treat,

In one passage in *The Medal*, he stretches out the so-called Alexandrine (which is really a six-foot metre) into one of fourteen syllables or seven feet.<sup>1</sup> In spite of this, it is largely to Dryden that we owe the development of the heroic couplet: he gave it point, vigour, and neatness, and it thus became a ready instrument for the trenchant wit of Pope. The latter is not sparing in expressing his indebtedness to him, whom he calls "Great Dryden"; and in his *Essay on Criticism* says:—

The power of music all our hearts allow,  
And what Timotheus was is Dryden now.

This fine tribute to his verse is well known:—

Waller was smooth; but Dryden taught to join  
The varying verse, the full-resounding line,  
The long majestic march and energy divine.

<sup>1</sup> Nor faith nor reason make thee at a stay:  
Thou leap'st o'er all eternal truths in thy Pindaric way.



To Dryden; too, we owe some of the noblest and most thoughtful lines that have gained their place in the common stock of quotation:—

Men are but children of a larger growth.  
 Passions in men oppressed are doubly strong.  
 Time gives himself, and is not valued.  
 That's empire, that which I can give away.  
 The greatest argument for love is love.

The cause of love can never be assigned;  
 'Tis in no face, but in the lover's mind.

The secret pleasure of the generous act  
 Is the great mind's great bribe.

Death in itself is nothing; but we fear  
 To be we know not what, we know not where.

No one has handled the heroic couplet with more vigour than Dryden. Pope was more correct, more sparkling, more finished, but he had not Dryden's magnificent march or sweeping impulsiveness. "The fire and spirit of the *Annus Mirabilis*," says a late critic, "are nothing short of amazing, when the difficulties which beset the author are remembered. The glorious dash of the performance is his own."

Dryden's life was that of a literary man, and, save as a political satirist, he took little or no part in the public life of his time. His energies were confined to his literary work, and the output was very great. His chief recreation was to preside in the afternoon, after the manner of Doctor Johnson, at Will's Coffee-house, over the assembly of wits, poets, and critics who congregated there, and to rule as arbiter on the intellectual topics of the hour. He died at his house in London on May Day of 1700, and was buried with great pomp and splendour in the Poets' Corner, in Westminster Abbey.

"He was a strong thinker, who sometimes carried common sense to a height where it catches the light of a diviner air, and warmed reason till it had well-nigh the illuminating property of intuition. . . . He sees, among other things, that a man who undertakes to write should first have a meaning perfectly defined to himself, and then should be able to set it forth clearly in the best words. This is precisely Dryden's praise; and amid the rickety sentiment looming big through misty phrase, which marks so much of modern literature, to read him is as bracing as a north-west wind. He blows the

mind clear. In ripeness of mind and bluff heartiness of expression, he takes rank with the best."—RUSSELL LOWELL.

"Dryden was a better prose-writer, and a bolder and more varied versifier than Pope; he was a more vigorous thinker, a more correct and logical declaimer, and had more of what may be called strength of mind than Pope; but he had not the same refinement and delicacy of feeling."—HAZLITT.

### THE RESTORATION DRAMA.

*9. The Stage in England seems to have retained and even extended its popularity during the reigns of James I. and Charles I. Previous to the breaking out of the Civil War, there were at least five companies of players in London. The Puritan Revolution put an end to this state of things. In that great struggle the actors adhered to the Royalist side; and on the triumph of the Parliament the theatres were closed, and the representation of stage plays forbidden by successive stringent ordinances. But so great a hold had the stage secured on public favour, that Cromwell seems to have sanctioned the evasion of these decrees by D'Avenant, to whom we shall presently refer. The return of Charles II. was largely the result of the fanatical austerity of the Puritans, and with his return the reign of licence began. The Restoration was the signal for the revival of stage plays; and a new drama appeared—the creation, under French influence, of writers differing materially in their ideas from their Elizabethan and Caroline predecessors. The Elizabethan tragedies gave way to the heroic plays, in which blank verse was quickly replaced by the rimed couplet; while Asiatic history and French romance were ransacked for plots which might lend themselves to the new passion for scenic effect and stately pageants. In these works we have, for the striking creations of Shakespeare, vague and shadowy characters which move unconvincingly in an unreal world. A sickly sentimentalism succeeded the healthy sentiment of the older dramatists; and a strict attention to the unities of the drama condemned the licence of plots in which conditions of time and space were alike disregarded. But still greater was the change in the treatment of Comedy. The breezy outdoor life of Shakespeare's Pastoral, and the wholesome laughter of Ben Jonson's Comedy of Humours, had now to give*

place to the artificial Comedy of Manners, with its stifling atmosphere of the court of Charles II., and its epigrammatic sneer at all that is good in human nature. Excessive lightness or seriousness was alike inadmissible in drawing-room society; and wit and precision became the canons of taste, and the sole requisites of success. The absence of even the germs of morality from the Comic Drama of the Restoration has called down the scathing censure of Macaulay, who effectually disposes of the apology of Charles Lamb that the characters of the stage are merely speculative, all being essentially vain and worthless, and belonging to the region of pure Comedy, where no cold moral reigns. Lamb contends that in reading these plays the moral judgment should be held in abeyance; Macaulay denies the feasibility of such an attitude of mind. As are the plays of this period, so too often are the lives of their writers; and the diary of Pepys confirms their accuracy as sketches of contemporary manners. It is remarkable that where the plot or character is borrowed from Molière<sup>1</sup> or other French dramatists, either is uniformly degraded in the adaptation. The attitude of these writers to their French originals is often that of Shylock to the Christians of Venice:—

“The villany you teach me, I will execute; and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.”

And, with all their affectation of French sparkle, these plays lack real gaiety. The rake turned moralist becomes a satirist, and biting epigram stands for hearty humour. Perhaps the sole redeeming quality of these comedies is the briskness and conciseness of the dialogue, where “refinement acts as a foil to affectation, and affectation to ignorance.” Conversation had become one of the necessities of daily life, and we find it polished to perfection in later English Comedy.

10. **Sir William D'Avenant** (1606—1668).—In this literary revolution Sir William D'Avenant (see p. 197) occupies an interesting position as the precursor of the heroic play, in rimed couplets, of Dryden, Otway, and Lee, and as the leader in the

<sup>1</sup> *Molière*—the stage name of the famous French writer of comedy, Jean Baptiste Poquelin. Born at Paris 1622, died 1673.

theatrical revival. During the Commonwealth D'Avenant had defied Puritan legislation by producing, at Rutland House, an entertainment, in operatic form, which he declared to be no play, but an opera. In this form appeared the first part of *The Siege of Rhodes*, afterwards added to and turned into a regular drama in 1661. On the return of Charles II., D'Avenant obtained a licence for a company of players, known from James, Duke of York, brother of the King, as "the Duke's Players." For them a new theatre was erected in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and the company included, among other celebrated actors, Betterton, who personated Hamlet at the age of seventy-four. By a curious arrangement, a fixed share of the profits was assigned to D'Avenant for the express purpose of the maintenance of the actresses, who now replaced boys in the female parts. These were accordingly boarded in his own house. Another innovation was the introduction of costly scenery and dresses. For the revival, in 1661, of D'Avenant's play *Love and Honour*, the coronation robes of the King, the Duke of York, and the Earl of Oxford were given to the company. The play usually commenced at half-past three o'clock, and the prices ranged from 1s. to 4s., but were sometimes doubled on first nights. D'Avenant had also revived the play of *Hamlet*, but finding Shakespeare unpopular, he conceived the daring idea of altering some of the Elizabethan dramas to suit the prevailing taste. Accordingly he produced *The Law against Lovers*, founded on Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, with the parts of Benedick and Beatrice imported from *Much Ado about Nothing*; *The Rivals*, an adaptation of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*; and, in conjunction with Dryden, *The Tempest*, a terrible travesty of Shakespeare's work. He also made some changes in *Macbeth*, and introduced the music by Locke, which still remains a feature in the performance of that play.

11. Sir George Etherege (1635—1691) became at the Restoration a prominent figure in the dissolute company of Whitehall; and he obtained a knighthood, in order to render him an acceptable suitor to a wealthy widow, whom he married. He wrote three comedies, which have been well termed a "reflection of the low wit and bad manners of the court of Charles II." The first of



these, *The Comical Revenge; or, Love in a Tub*, was acted at the Duke's Theatre in 1664, and was dedicated to Lord Buckhurst, afterwards Earl of Dorset. In it the serious scenes are written in rimed couplets, following the practice and precept of Dryden's *Rival Ladies*. So great was its success that the company are said to have cleared from its receipts £1,000 in a month. In 1676 Etherege produced his last and best known comedy, *The Man of Mode; or, Sir Fopling Flutter*. The characters had their prototypes in court life, and the play is a tangled skein of vulgar intrigue faintly redeemed by some amusing situations.

12. **Sir Charles Sedley** (1639—1701) was born at Aylesford, in Kent. After the Restoration he sat, as Baron of one of the Cinque Ports,<sup>1</sup> for New Romney, but was a boon companion of the worst roysterers in the court circle. King Charles II. told him that "Nature had given him a patent to be Apollo's Viceroy," and he was flattered by Rochester, Buckingham, and Shadwell. Dryden, too, who introduces him in the *Essay of Dramatic Poetry* under the anagram of Lisideius, terms him the "Tibullus of his age." His principal works are *Beauty the Conqueror* (1677), an independent treatment of the history of Antony and Cleopatra, not to be confounded with Dryden's adaptation of Shakespeare, written in heroic couplets, with free use of the triplet; *The Mulberry Garden* (1668), largely borrowed from Molière's *Ecole des Maris*, partly in prose, partly in rimed couplets; and *Bellamira*. He also wrote translations, pamphlets, and epigrams, and was a courtly leader of the letters of his day.

13. **Aphra** (or **Ayfara**) **Behn** (1640—1689), born at Wye, in Kent, was the daughter of a barber named Johnson, but was adopted when an infant by a relative, who received the post of lieutenant-general of Surinam, and with him she sailed for the West Indies. Her adopted father died on the voyage; but his family, including the child Aphra, settled in the colony, where they remained till its cession to the Dutch in 1658, when they returned to England. Aphra married a wealthy London merchant

<sup>1</sup> *Cinque Ports* (French)=Five Ports, the name for the five ports on the English Channel—Hastings, Romney, Hythe, Dover, and Sandwich. They returned members to Parliament, termed "Barons of the Cinque Ports," and were governed by a Lord Warden, a title still retained.

named Behn, of Dutch extraction. She seems to have made the acquaintance of Charles II., and is said to have amused him by her eloquent descriptions of life in the West Indies. On the death of her husband, about 1666, she was left unprovided for, and was employed as a Government spy in the Low Countries. After many adventures she returned to England, and proceeded to earn her livelihood by her writings. She is interesting as the first woman who lived by her pen in England. She wrote novels, tales, and plays; and adapted some of the tragedies of the older writers and the comedies of Molière to the taste of the day. Her plays exhibit the coarseness which marks the Restoration drama; her tales are in general devoid of interest, though one of them, *Oroonoko*, is the subject of Southerne's tragedy of that name; but some of her verses are not without merit. The only plays of hers which are now remembered are *The Rover* and *The Town Fop*.

14. **Thomas Otway** (1651—1685), born at Trotton, in Sussex, was the only son of a clergyman. He was educated at Winchester School, whence he proceeded in 1669 to Christ Church, Oxford. He had been intended for orders, but the death of his father cut short his college career, and in 1671 he came to London in search of a means of livelihood. He attached himself to the theatres, and is known to have acted a part in one of Mrs. Aphra Behn's dramas. His first play, *Alcibiades*, first printed in 1675, was unsuccessful; but *Don Carlos*, which appeared the following year, secured the powerful patronage of Rochester, and succeeded in hitting the popular taste. Otway now turned his attention to translation, and produced a version of Racine's<sup>1</sup> *Titus and Berenice*, and another of Molière's, *Les Fourberies de Scapin*. His hopeless attachment to the celebrated actress, Mrs. Barry, who had appeared in his earliest play, earned him the dislike and derision of his former patron, Rochester, who was attached to the same woman. Otway consequently procured, in 1678, from another patron, the Earl of Plymouth, a son of Charles II., a commission in a regiment which had been raised for service in Flanders. The troops were soon after disbanded, and the officers

<sup>1</sup> *Racine*.—Jean Baptiste Racine, a great French tragic dramatist; born 1639, died 1699.

received for their arrears of pay unsaleable bonds. Otway now produced an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, entitled *Caius Marius*, most of which, he tells us, was written in camp, and which long displaced its original from the English stage. In 1680 appeared *The Orphan*, which was one of the plays attacked by Jeremy Collier in his *Short View of the English Stage*. By this time Otway should have been realising some income from his dramatic works; but an author's profits were at this time small and precarious, and his hopeless passion for Mrs. Barry and his wretched dependence on patrons sapped his self-respect, so that he became a drunkard and a parasite. Nevertheless, in 1682 his greatest creative effort, *Venice Preserved; or, A Plot Discovered*, was produced. This play, dedicated to the Duchess of Portsmouth, had a great contemporary success, partly owing to the scare of the Popish Plot; it is said by Hallam to have been more frequently seen on the stage than any of the older dramas, except those of Shakespeare, and it was acted down to our day.

The poet died, in sore need, in a wretched hostelry on Tower Hill, at the early age of thirty-four. According to one account, having begged a shilling, when starving, from a gentleman outside a coffee-house, he was choked whilst ravenously devouring a roll of bread; according to another, he had pursued on foot the assassin of a friend, and when heated and exhausted drank eagerly a glass of water, which occasioned his death. Whatever be the truth, there seems to be little doubt that his death was hastened, if not caused, by privation and intemperance; and his end is constantly referred to as an instance of contemporary neglect of genius. In Otway's works we find the best example of the English heroic play, the equivalent, though not the copy, of Racine. Though the rimed couplets of *Don Carlos* have some of that cold artificial tone which repels us in Dryden's earlier works, and the blank verse of *Venice Preserved* lacks the varied rhythm of the greater Elizabethans, the plots of these plays are classical in their unity and simplicity, and the characters and situations alike replete with pathos and human interest. A certain want of distinction in his language is, perhaps, Otway's most striking fault. He has, nevertheless, earned the praise of the greatest critics, from Dryden

to Coleridge. The following is the conclusion of the last interview between Jaffier and Belvidera in *Venice Preserved*:—

[*Passing bell tolls.*]

*Jaffier.* Hark, the dismal bell  
Tolls out for death! I must attend its call too;  
For my poor friend, my dying Pierre, expects me;  
He sent a message to require I'd see him  
Before he died, and take his last forgiveness.  
Farewell for ever!

*Belvidera.* Leave thy dagger with me.  
Bequeath me something.—Not one kiss at parting?  
[*Jaffier, going out, looks back at her.*]  
O my poor heart, when wilt thou break?

*Jaffier.* Yet stay,  
We have a child, as yet a tender infant:  
Be a kind mother to him when I'm gone,  
Breed him in virtue and the paths of honour,  
But let him never know his father's story;  
I charge thee guard him from the wrongs my fate  
May do his future fortune, or his name.  
Now—nearer yet! Oh, that my arms were rivetted  
Thus round thee ever! But my friends, my oath—  
This, and no more. [Kisses her.]

15. **Nathaniel Lee** (1653—1692), the son of a chaplain to General Monck, was educated under the famous Dr. Busby, at Westminster School, and at Trinity College, Cambridge. He gained the notice of the Duke of Buckingham, who introduced him to Rochester and the courtly wits, whose vices Lee seems to have been not slow to imitate. He became an actor, and, though an admirable master of elocution, failed on the boards through nervousness, and he turned his attention to writing for the stage. Lee wrote a number of plays, and for his plots he selected classical subjects, which he freely altered to suit his convenience. His first play, *Nero*, written in heroic couplets, was produced in 1675, and two years later appeared his most successful drama, written in blank verse, *The Rival Queens; or, The Death of Alexander the Great*. This contains the generally misquoted line—

When Greeks join'd Greeks then was the tug of war.

Indeed, Lee has left us several lines better known than is the source from which they are derived, such as—

'Tis Beauty calls, and Glory shows the way!



*Mithridates, King of Pontus*, one of his best plays, was produced in 1678. Lee collaborated with Dryden in adaptation of Sophocles' *Oedipus*, of which the latter contributed the first and third acts, and also in the production of *The Duke of Guise*. At length Lee's mind gave way, and in 1684 he was lodged in Bethlehem Hospital. After five years' confinement he was released, and a pension of £10 a year bestowed on him by the company of the Theatre Royal. This he did not long enjoy; for in 1692, when returning home intoxicated from a tavern, he fell, and was stifled in the snow.

In his dramas Lee was a close student of the Elizabethans, and in especial seems to have taken Marlowe for his model. While his plays contain much which may justly be termed "rant and fustian," he is more vivid and imaginative than his contemporaries. He borrows phrases and turns of thought from Shakespeare, and sometimes equals Otway in tenderness. "His thoughts," says Steele in *The Spectator*, "are wonderfully suited to tragedy, but frequently lost in such a cloud of words that it is hard to see the beauty of them." He showed great skill in adapting his pieces to the popular taste; though perhaps it was this skill which called down on him the wrath of the Lord Chamberlain, in suppressing the play, *Lucius Junius Brutus*, from the idea that the character of Tarquin reflected on King Charles II. He has in many of his plays dealt with madness—e.g., in *Caesar Borgia*—and Steele refers to his Alexander as "a mad hero drawn by a mad poet."

We now arrive at the brilliant quartette of writers whose work constitutes the main feature of Restoration Comedy—namely, **Wycherley, Vanbrugh, Farquhar, and Congreve.**

16. **William Wycherley** (1640—1715) was the eldest son of a gentleman of old family and comfortable estate at Clive, or Cleve, near Shrewsbury, where the poet was born in 1640. He was sent, at about fifteen years of age, to France for his education, and became a convert to the Church of Rome. On the Restoration he returned to England, having acquired much courtly polish, and became a Fellow Commoner of Queen's College, Oxford, where he rejoined the Anglican Church. He left without a degree, and was entered of the Middle Temple, but does not seem to have prosecuted his legal studies. His first play, *Love in a Wood*, is said to have been written when he was but nineteen; but this is doubtful, as the play was first acted in 1671, when its author was thirty years of age. This obtained for him the patronage of the Duke of

Buckingham, who introduced him to the notice of King Charles II. Wycherley served for a short time on board the Fleet in the second Dutch war, and about the same time produced his next play, *The Gentleman Dancing Master*. The main incident is taken from a Spanish play of the same name by Calderon;<sup>1</sup> but its treatment by Wycherley has nothing in common with its original, and loses in moral tone what it gains in wit and vivacity. The play was not a complete success, and its author now turned to Molière, one of whose plays we have already seen adopted by Sedley, and borrowed from him the subjects for his two most famous comedies—*The Plain Dealer*, founded on *Le Misanthrope*; and *The Country Wife*, based on *L'Ecole des Femmes* and *L'Ecole des Maris*. Wycherley's indebtedness to Molière, as to Calderon, is, however, limited to the merest framework of his plays; the characters are entirely of his own conception and development. *The Country Wife* was produced before *The Plain Dealer*, though written after it, according to Wycherley's statement to Pope. The latter appeared early in 1674, and was quickly followed by the author's marriage with the Earl of Drogheda's young widow, an ex-maid-of-honour, whose father had been Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. This cost the bridegroom the favour of King Charles II. and the post of tutor to the young Duke of Richmond, which the monarch had destined for him. After a short period of married life, Wycherley lost his wife; and, in endeavouring to secure her fortune, involved himself in difficulties, which led to his committal to the Fleet Prison,<sup>2</sup> where he remained a prisoner for seven years. After his accession James II. paid the author's debts, and settled on him a pension of £200 per annum. The death of his father placed Wycherley in possession of an estate; and the poet, who was never long out of debt, quarrelled with his heir. To spite this heir, Wycherley on his deathbed married a young woman whose fortune would enable him to pay his debts, while the provisions of the entail on the estate allowed of his charging it with a jointure for her of £400 a year.

<sup>1</sup> Calderon (Pedro Calderon de la Barca), born at Madrid 1600, died 1681. A celebrated Spanish dramatist and poet.

<sup>2</sup> Fleet Prison, an old gaol in London; destroyed in 1846, after having served as a debtors' prison for centuries.

In his last days he is said to have returned to the Church of Rome.

(i) His intimacy with Pope has given rise to much controversy. The young poet seems at first to have been pleased and flattered by the notice of the old playwright; but, as he felt his own growing powers, he permitted himself a freedom of criticism resented by the latter, and a coolness ensued, though the younger poet says: "He never did an unjust thing to me in his whole life; and I went to see him on his deathbed."

(ii) The coarseness of Wycherley's plays has long banished them from the stage; but the situations are often humorous, and the wit of the dialogue undeniable. Wycherley never even approached the lightness of his French originals. His clearness and force seem the result of strenuous labour, and he has been termed "slow" by contemporary critics. Rochester speaks of—

Hasty Shadwell and slow Wycherley.

And again—

But Wycherley earns hard whate'er he gains,  
He wants no judgment, and he spares no pains.

Pope repeats Rochester—

How Shadwell hasty, Wycherley was slow.

Probably the sternest censure of the age in which he lived is the general application to him, from the name of the scandalous hero of *The Plain Dealer*, of the epithet "manly." Dryden has the line—

The satire, wit, and strength of manly Wycherley;

and Macaulay says of Manly, the character from whose name the epithet is borrowed, that in him Wycherley "was really delineating the greatest rascal that is to be found even in his own writings."

17. **Sir John Vanbrugh** (1666—1726), the second son of Gyles Vanbrugh, a wealthy sugar baker of Dutch extraction, was born in London in 1666. At nineteen years of age he was sent to France to complete his education, and is believed to have been for some time imprisoned in the Bastille on suspicion of being a spy. On his return to England he served for a short time in the army; and in 1695 he was appointed Secretary to the Commission for endowing Greenwich Hospital. He soon after produced, at Drury Lane Theatre, his first play, *The Relapse*. It was so successful that Charles Montague, afterwards Lord Halifax, asked the author to write a play for his theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, in accordance with which request Vanbrugh completed *The Provok'd Wife* (1697). In 1702 appeared *The False Friend*, an adaptation of a Spanish play. Vanbrugh now turned his attention to architecture, which he had

probably studied while in France, and was appointed Comptroller of the Royal Works. He erected a theatre in the Haymarket by subscription among his friends; but it was condemned for its faulty acoustic properties. Here, nevertheless, were produced his next plays, *The Confederacy* and *The Mistake*, both adapted from French originals. Meantime he was occupied in the erection of Castle Howard, the seat of the Earl of Carlisle. He also built the great structure of Blenheim, erected at the national expense for the Duke of Marlborough; and when in 1714 King George I. landed at Greenwich, Vanbrugh received the honour of knighthood. He died in his sixtieth year, leaving unfinished what promised to be one of his best comedies, *A Journey to London*. The plays of Vanbrugh are characterised by a simplicity and gaiety much more akin to the work of Molière than those of any other of his English imitators, with the possible exception of those of Congreve. Perhaps the reason of this is that the author writes naturally and spontaneously. Brighter inventive faculties and a lighter comic vein distinguish his work from that of his contemporaries. Though some of his best known characters are manifestly copied from those of the earlier Restoration drama, yet he has left us such creations as Brass and Dick Amlet in *The Confederacy*, which are no less original than diverting. The following epitaph was suggested by Dr. Evans:—

Under this stone, reader, survey  
Dead Sir John Vanbrugh's house of clay:  
Lie heavy on him, earth! for he  
Laid many heavy loads on thee.

However pertinent these lines may be to his style in architecture, which was massive, bold, and durable, they in no way suggest that of his comedies, which have an airiness to which Pope does scant justice in the line—

How Van wants grace, who never wanted wit.

18. **George Farquhar** (1678—1707) is one of the earliest examples of the Irish man of letters, afterwards to become so notable a feature of our literature. The son of a clergyman, he was born in Londonderry, and educated in that city. He was sent to Trinity College, Dublin, but became an actor in a city



theatre, and, strange to say, seems to have made his début as Othello. His voice was weak and he lacked confidence; and having had the misfortune, through absence of mind, to wound a fellow-actor severely in a performance of Dryden's *Indian Emperor*, he quitted the boards. He obtained an introduction to Lord Orrery, who bestowed on him a commission in his own regiment. Like Otway, Farquhar found in his failure as an actor an incentive to the writing of plays; he left for London and wrote *Love and a Bottle*, which was successfully acted at Drury Lane in 1699. Next year he produced *The Constant Couple*, which is said to have been acted fifty-three times in London, and twenty-three in Dublin. Encouraged by so favourable a reception, he added a sequel to it in *Sir Harry Wildair*, with less success; and in 1704 he visited Dublin and acted the part of that hero, by which he realized £100. His next play, *The Recruiting Officer*, produced in 1706, is believed to be based on his own experience in that capacity. A painful story is told of his end. He was induced through pressure of debts to sell his commission, on a promise of a captaincy from the Duke of Ormonde. The delay in the fulfilment of this promise is said to have so preyed on him that he broke down and died, after having completed his last and best known play, *The Beaux' Stratagem*, during "a settled illness" of six weeks. This play is remarkable for having given permanent names to two ordinary English types in "Boniface," the landlord of the inn at Lichfield, and "Lady Bountiful," the fussy but well-meaning physic- and dole-giving lady of the manor. Good-natured and gentlemanly in his life and in his works, he might be taken as the lineal predecessor of Oliver Goldsmith in his writings and his misfortunes. His plays are remarkable for high spirits and truthfulness to life.

19. **William Congreve** (1670—1729).—We now reach the name of by far the greatest dramatist of the Restoration period, who to the gaiety of Etherege or Sedley could join the tenderness of Otway and the satiric force of Wycherley, with a nicety of phrase which is all his own. Congreve was born at Bardsey, in the neighbourhood of Leeds, in 1670. His father, an officer in the army, obtained, soon after the birth of his distinguished son, the command of the garrison of Youghal, and the family removed to Ireland. He was educated

at Kilkenny College, where he is believed to have been a contemporary of Swift, and in Trinity College, Dublin. On the success of the Revolution of 1688, Congreve left Dublin for England, and two years later, having decided on adopting the profession of the law, was entered of the Middle Temple in London. His attention was early turned to literature, and his first published work was a novel of some merit, called *Incognita*, in the style introduced by Mrs. Aphra Behn (p. 263). He soon made the acquaintance of Dryden, with whom he successfully collaborated in classical translation; and in 1693 appeared his first comedy, *The Old Bachelor*. The play was a great success and had a run of fourteen nights, a notable duration for this time. Never had a literary effort been so well rewarded. Charles Montague (afterwards Lord Halifax), then a Lord of the Treasury, bestowed on the author the post of Commissioner for Licensing Hackney Coaches. In later life, indeed, offices were showered upon him, and he was at one time possessor of an official income of £1,200 a year: he is well termed by Thackeray "the most eminent literary 'swell' of his age." His head was somewhat turned by the flatteries of Dryden, of Pope, of the court ladies; and when he was waited on by Voltaire, he begged that he would consider him merely as a gentleman, affecting to regard his plays as trifles of his idle hours. The retort of the caustic Frenchman was as severe as it was deserved: "If you had been merely a gentleman, I should not have come to see you."

Congreve's second play, *The Double Dealer*, appeared in 1694, and though extravagantly praised by the critics, took longer to acquire the favour of the public. The influence of Wycherley is traceable in the delineation of some of the characters, and the more sombre and bitter satire of the piece contrasts with the superficial gaiety of his earlier play. The author's use of the stage soliloquy was not relished by an age which had put away such conventions with the Elizabethan drama, and it was abandoned by Congreve in his later plays. It was in a performance of *The Double Dealer* that Colley Cibber, then a young and unknown actor, scored his first success.

*Love for Love* is generally reckoned Congreve's masterpiece; the dialogue is no less captivating, the characters are more life-like, and the interest better sustained than in his other comedies. It is

especially interesting as affording the first appearance on the stage of the British sailor, henceforth so common a feature in certain classes of drama. The character of Ben is quite original, and lends a freshness to the play which admits of a not unfavourable comparison with Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*.

Strange to say, Congreve's next effort was in the domain of tragedy. *The Mourning Bride* has long been the best known and most read of his works. Its first line—

Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast—

is only to be equalled in familiarity by the well-known "tag" at the end of the third act:—

Heaven has no rage, like love to hatred turned,  
Nor hell a fury, like a woman scorned.

Though often ridiculed, these are amongst the stock quotations of our language. The play, written as a rule in not inelegant blank verse, has many passages in the rimed couplet, such as:—

Conquest and triumph, now, are mine no more :  
Nor will I victory in camps adore :  
For lingering there in long suspense she stands,  
Shifting the prize in unresolving hands :  
Unused to wait, I broke through her delay,  
Fixed her by force, and snatched the doubtful day.  
Now late I find that war is but her sport ;  
In love the goddess keeps her awful court :  
Fickle in fields, unsteadily she flies,  
But rules with settled sway in Zara's eyes.

Of the following passage of blank verse Dr. Johnson said that if he were "required to select from the whole mass of English poetry the most poetical paragraph, he knew not what he could prefer to this exclamation":—

No, all is hushed, and still as death.—'Tis dreadful !  
How reverend is the face of this tall pile,  
Whose ancient pillars rear their marble heads  
To bear aloft its arched and ponderous roof,  
By its own weight made steadfast and immovable,  
Looking tranquillity ! It strikes an awe  
And terror on my aching sight ; the tombs  
And monumental caves of death look cold,  
And shoot a chillness to my trembling heart.  
Give me thy hand, and let me hear thy voice ;  
Nay, quickly speak to me, and let me hear  
Thy voice—my own affrights me with its echoes.

The verdict of later critics and of the reading public has sternly refused to ratify this decision of the great literary dictator of his day. *The Mourning Bride*, though regarded with anxiety by the friends of the poet, was the most triumphant success which he had yet achieved, and shared the reputation of Otway's *Venice Preserved* as a stock piece for nearly a century.

In 1697 appeared Jeremy Collier's celebrated *View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*. Though right in its main contention, and called forth by a serious evil, it erred in matters of detail. To these Congreve not too happily replied; and the influence of Collier's pamphlet on the public mind may be traced in the comparative failure of Congreve's last and least successful play, *The Way of the World*, produced in 1700. In his latter years he became the special protégé of the second Duchess of Marlborough (daughter of the first Duke), to whom he bequeathed his savings, amounting to no less than £10,000—an act of gross selfishness, in which he was forgetful of the claims of relatives and other friends alike. When he died his body lay in state at Westminster, and his funeral was attended by the most representative people in the land.

Hazlitt considers Congreve "the highest model of comic dialogue." His comedies deal, however, almost entirely with the worst side of human nature, and seem to reflect, indeed, but too faithfully, the heartless glitter of that fashionable society in which he moved, and of which he himself was so conspicuous a type. His plots are often complicated, and redeemed from tediousness only by the sparkling dialogue and brilliant wit.

20. Of the minor dramatists of this period, **John Crowne** (died 1703) is one of the most versatile, but least interesting. His most successful play, a comedy styled *Sir Courtly Nice; or, It Cannot Be* was the first play acted before James II. after his accession, and held the stage for a century.

21. **Thomas Shadwell** (1640—1692) was a Norfolk man, and first entered the literary world with a play, *The Sullen Lovers*, an adaptation of one of Molière's, which was produced in 1668. In a preface he declared himself a disciple of Ben Jonson's "Comedy of Humours"; and in his plays accordingly we find



some single attribute, and that too generally an unimportant one, made the central feature of the play. His next piece, *The Royal Shepherdess* (1669), was pronounced by Pepys to be "the silliest for words, and design, and everything, that ever I saw in my whole life." His literary activity was now great; he wrote several plays, including *Epsom Wells* (1672), in conjunction with Sedley: in 1673 he produced yet another version of Shakespeare's *Tempest*, entitled *The Enchanted Island*; and in 1674 the opera of *Psyche*, based on Molière, the scenery for which cost £800. His conceit was unbounded. He says of his version of Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*, "I can truly say I have made it into a play." His *Lancashire Witches* (1681) is the subject of a paper in Addison's *Spectator*. Political differences led to a quarrel with Dryden, which called forth the *MacFlecknoe* of the latter. Shadwell also figures as Og in *Absalom and Achitophel*. In 1688 Shadwell had his revenge. Dryden was deprived of his laureateship, which was bestowed upon the victim of his satire. In three years he produced four more comedies. He was a hasty but brilliant writer, of whom Rochester has said, "If Shadwell had burnt all he wrote, and printed all he spoke, he would have had more wit and humour than any other poet."

22. **Thomas Southerne** (1660—1746) is best known by his tragedies. Born in Dublin the year of the Restoration, he differs in all material respects from the ordinary type of Irish man of letters, being thrifty, prudent, and business-like in his own conduct and in his dealings with others. After graduating at Trinity College, Dublin, he came to London to study law, and was entered of the Middle Temple, but joined the army, and is believed to have been present at Sedgemoor. He had early commenced as a writer of plays, *The Loyal Brother* having been produced when its author was but twenty-two years of age. This was followed by a comedy, both of which were fairly successful. Returning to London with the rank of captain, he again became a writer for the stage. With a business capacity unusual in dramatic writers, he succeeded in improving the terms accorded to authors, and also secured a fair price from the publishers for rights of publication, in one instance getting as much as £150. His best and most

successful plays are two sentimental tragedies, *The Fatal Marriage* (1694) and *Oroonoko* (1696), which preceded Congreve's *Mourning Bride*. *Oroonoko* is founded on Mrs. Aphra Behn's semi-biographical novel of the same name, and is the first attempt at dramatising the wrongs of the African slave. Both plays are disfigured by anomalous and inconsequent comic underplots. As a dramatist he may be regarded as a weaker Otway; his influence was in the direction of a closer approximation to the colder French classical models, without attaining their dignity.

23. One of the most interesting personalities of the period is **Colley Cibber** (1671—1757), who has alike secured distinction as an actor, as a dramatist, and as a prose writer. He was born in Bloomsbury, London, the son of a Danish sculptor settled in England. His mother was a descendant of William of Wykeham, and her son applied unsuccessfully for election to Winchester College, of which his distinguished maternal ancestor was the founder. He joined the united companies at the Theatre Royal, London, as an actor; in 1695 he determined to write a play for himself, and produced *Love's Last Shift; or, The Fool in Fashion*, in which he acted the principal part. As a sequel to this play Vanbrugh wrote *The Relapse*. In 1700 Cibber produced an altered version of Shakespeare's *Richard III.*, which held the boards as the only acting edition of that play till 1821, and is still sometimes acted. His most successful plays were *The Non-Juror*, a clever adaptation of Molière's *Tartuffe*; and *The Provok'd Husband*. In 1730 he was appointed Poet Laureate, which distinction earned for Cibber the bitter enmity of Pope, who undeservedly honoured him, in the *Dunciad*, with the throne of stupidity at first allotted to Theobald. Johnson also has made this appointment the subject of the following epigram:—

Augustus still survives in Maro's strain,  
And Spenser's verse prolongs Eliza's reign;  
Great George's acts let tuneful Cibber sing,  
For Nature formed the poet for the King!

The same writer admits, however, that he found the autobiography which appeared in 1740 with the title *Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber* a very entertaining work; and it is still

read for its sound contemporary criticism. In Colley Cibber we have "a sparkling and successful dramatist, a comedian of high mark, a singularly capable and judicious manager, and an unequalled critic of theatrical performances."

24. **Nicholas Rowe** (1674—1718) was one of the few men of letters of the period who followed literature without being dependent on it. His father's death in 1692 left him a competence of £300 a year, and enabled him to gratify his taste for the writing of plays. The curious drama, *Tamerlane*, was produced in 1702, of which the hero Tamerlane, depicted as a calm philosophic prince, was supposed to represent King William III., and the mean and treacherous Bajazet his adversary Louis XIV. of France. This play was for years performed on the anniversary of the landing of William of Orange. In 1703 appeared probably his most successful play, the *Fair Penitent*, an adaptation of Massinger's *Fatal Dowry*. Of the two plays Sir Walter Scott has said that Rowe's "fell as far below Massinger's as the boldest translation can sink below the most spirited original." Yet of the same play Dr. Johnson, in his *Essay on the Drama*, remarks: "There is scarcely any work of any poet at once so interesting by the fable and so delightful in the language." The name of the villain of the play has passed into our common English speech as "the gallant gay Lothario." Rowe attempted an imitation of Shakespeare's style in *Jane Shore*, a piece long a favourite with the public; but of which Pope declared that the sentence, "And so good morrow t'ye, good master lieutenant," borrowed piecemeal from Shakespeare, is the only imitation of his style in the play. Rowe succeeded Tate as Poet Laureate, and obtained the post of Land Surveyor of the Customs of the Port of London, with other Government offices. He was the first to edit the plays of Shakespeare in the modern sense of the term, and received for his labours the very insufficient sum of £36 10s. Rowe had a familiar acquaintance with classical and continental literature, and he was himself a favourite author with French readers, three of his plays—*Tamerlane*, the *Fair Penitent*, and *Jane Shore*—having been translated into that language.

25. One more dramatic writer may be here mentioned—namely, **George Lillo** (1693—1736), son of a Dutch jeweller, and born in

Moorfields, London. Two of his plays were successful, *The London Merchant; or, The History of George Barnwell* (1731), and *Fatal Curiosity* (1736). Both of these plays are founded on old ballads, and the former may be said to have popularised the domestic drama. It was long selected for an annual performance on Shrove Tuesday at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, and was a favourite with London audiences for more than a century. Thackeray has burlesqued it in *George de Barnwell*.

26. **The Courtly Poets.**—To the dramatic writers of the Restoration may be added the “courtly poets,” Buckingham, Dorset, and Rochester, who acted the parts of patrons and critics alike to dramatists and actors. **George Villiers**, second Duke of Buckingham (1628—1687), son of the ill-fated favourite of Charles I., was one of the ablest and most unprincipled of the courtiers of Charles II. He is the Zimri of Dryden’s *Absalom and Achitophel*. His career is mainly political; his interest for students of literature lies in his being the principal author, in collaboration with others, of *The Rehearsal*, a burlesque intended to ridicule such plays as Dryden’s *Indian Emperor* and *Conquest of Granada*. **Charles Sackville**, sixth Earl of Dorset (1638—1706), travelled abroad during the unsettled times of the Commonwealth, but returned with Charles II. in 1660. A courtier and a wit, he led a loose and dissipated life, and Walpole styles him “the finest gentleman of the court.” He volunteered to serve against the Dutch in the fleet which had been commissioned, and was present at the great naval victory of June 3rd, 1665. On this occasion he composed his well-known song, perfect of its kind, “To all you ladies now at land,” written, it is said, the night before the engagement. He acted as a patron to such men as Dryden, Butler, and Wycherley. To his honour it is stated that when, as Lord Chamberlain under William III., he was obliged to withdraw Dryden’s pension as Poet Laureate, he replaced it by an equivalent sum from his own estate. He wrote some occasional poems, but few of any merit. **John Wilmot**, second Earl of Rochester (1647—1680), pithily described in the *Dictionary of National Biography* as “poet and libertine,” was the youngest and most profligate of the courtiers of Charles II. He was, nevertheless, a



man of letters and a patron of the poets. To him are dedicated many of the plays of Dryden, Crowne, Lee, and Otway. As a critic he imitated the 10th Satire of Horace and wrote *The Session of the Poets*; as a satirist he composed *A Satire against Mankind*. Of him, indeed, Andrew Marvell is reported to have said "that Rochester was the only man in England that had the true vein of satire." His best known verses are his *Poem upon Nothing*, commencing:—

Nothing! thou elder brother ev'n to shade,  
That hadst a being ere the word was made,  
And (well fixt) art, alone, of ending not afraid.

With these poets may be contrasted **Wentworth Dillon**, fourth Earl of Roscommon, in Ireland (1633—1685), nephew of the Earl of Strafford. He had lived for some time in France: he translated (1680) the *Ars Poetica* of Horace into blank verse; and wrote, in rimed couplets, *An Essay on Translated Verse* (1684). In the latter occurs an encomium on Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Roscommon being the first critic to acknowledge its merit. To him Pope refers in the lines:—

Unhappy Dryden!—in all Charles's days  
Roscommon only boasts unspotted bays.

## CHAPTER XV.

---

### POPE AND THE AUGUSTAN AGE.

1. **Alexander Pope** (1688—1744).—The most polished exponent of the school of the so-called "Augustan Age," which found in the ancient classics the source of its inspiration, was Alexander Pope. The adoption of French classicism by the Restoration poets gave a hybrid growth to our literature, the pernicious influences of which were intensified by Dryden, the greatest writer of his age. The classical spirit dominated the eighteenth century, and wit, good sense, and taste ruled supreme in every domain of human thought and expression. The rimer-heroic metre was the accepted type of dignified verse; and notwithstanding its artificiality, its measured pauses, its tendency to unite the sense with the couplet, Pope succeeded in raising it to the highest degree of perfection, which none of his successors equalled, much less excelled. Pope was born in London, the son of a Roman Catholic linen-draper. The two most striking features in Pope's career are his precocity and his ill-health. "He inherited headaches from his mother, and a crooked figure from his father." The religion of his parents excluded him from the public schools and universities of England. At the age of five he showed such promising signs of intelligence that his aunt chose him to be the legatee of all her books, pictures, and medals. At the age of eight he had translated part of the Latin poet Statius, at twelve he had left school and settled down, of his own accord, to a life of study and literary labour. His poetical reading lay chiefly in Spenser and Dryden; at fifteen he had written a long epic poem, which he afterwards burnt; at eighteen

he wrote his *Pastorals*; and, before he was five and twenty, he had embarked on the longest and one of the greatest of his works—the translation of Homer. As regards his health, he speaks, in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, of his life as “one long disease.” He was bald, a dwarf about four feet in height, somewhat hunch-backed, miserably thin and sickly-looking. Even when he was grown-up, he could not dress or undress himself; in the morning he was laced into a stiff canvas bodice; he wore a fur doublet under his shirt, and three pairs of stockings on his legs; and he was so small that he required a high chair at table, just like a child. On the other hand, he had most beautiful eyes and so sweet a voice that he was sometimes called “the little nightingale.”

2. **His Early Works.**—The *Pastorals* did not appear till the year 1709, before Pope had come of age. But these poems, melodious and smooth, and highly finished though they be, are little more than clever school-boy exercises—a set of experiments in correct versification. His *Essay on Criticism*, written in rimed heroic metre, was published two years after (in 1711), though it was written when he was only nineteen. Addison praised this poem highly in *The Spectator*; and Sir Richard Steele introduced Pope to Addison himself in the year 1712. The *Essay* is a brilliant rendering or adaptation of many excellent critical remarks to be found in the *Ars Poetica* of Horace and in *L'Art Poétique* of Boileau. The poem contains many well-known lines and couplets:

A little learning is a dangerous thing;  
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring!

A perfect judge will read each work of wit  
With the same spirit that its author writ.

True wit is nature to advantage dress'd,  
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed.

But most by numbers judge a poet's song;  
And smooth or rough, with them, is right or wrong.  
In the bright muse, though thousand charms conspire,  
Her voice is all these tuneful fools admire;  
Who haunt Parnassus but to please their ear,  
Not mend their minds; as some to church repair,  
Not for the doctrine, but the music there.

Avoid extremes; and shun the fault of such,  
Who still are pleas'd too little or too much.

The bookful blockhead, ignorantly read,  
With loads of learned lumber in his head.

"Pope has dressed the old maxims so neatly, and turned them out with such sparkle and point, that these truisms have acquired a bouquet not their own, and they circulate as proverbs among us in virtue of their pithy form rather than their truth."—MARK PATTISON.

*The Rape of the Lock* was published in 1712: "No more brilliant, sparkling, vivacious trifle is to be found in our literature," says Sir Leslie Stephen. Addison called it "the pure salt of wit" (*merum sal*); Hazlitt, "the most exquisite specimen of filigree work ever invented." It is a mock-heroic poem, based on the incident of the theft (by Lord Petre) of a lock of hair from a young lady (Miss Fermor). The machinery of the poem—sylphs, gnomes, and other spirits—is borrowed from the system of the Rosicrucians, a sect of mystical philosophers well known throughout Europe in the seventeenth century. The supernatural agencies are admirably introduced, and take the place of the gods and goddesses who play so important a part in the epic poetry of Greece and Rome.

Know, then, unnumber'd spirits round thee fly,  
The light militia of the lower sky;  
These, though unseen, are ever on the wing,  
Hang o'er the box, and hover round the ring.

Some to the sun their insect-wings unfold,  
Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold;  
Transparent forms, too fine for mortal sight,  
Their fluid bodies half dissolved in light.

Whatever spirit, careless of his charge,  
His post neglects, or leaves the fair at large,  
Shall feel sharp vengeance soon o'ertake his sins,  
Be stopp'd in vials, or transfix'd with pins.

The lock is at length transported to the sky, to shine there for ever as a new constellation.

Then cease, bright nymph! to mourn thy ravish'd hair,  
Which adds new glory to the shining sphere! . . .  
This Lock the muse shall consecrate to fame,  
And, midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name!

**3. Translations of Homer.**—The most active part of Pope's literary career falls within the years from 1709 to 1715. The first volume of the *Iliad* was published in the year 1715. By



this time Swift was sounding the praises of Pope at court, and in the most select society of London, as "the best poet in England," adding, "I want you all to subscribe for his translation of Homer, for the author shall not begin to print till I have a thousand guineas for him." By the time Pope had produced both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, he had made nine thousand guineas by the whole work. This at least secured independence for him during the rest of his life. He says—

For, thanks to Homer, I can live and thrive  
Indebted to no prince or peer alive.

Pope's Homer was not translated from the original Greek, but from the French version of Madame Dacier, assisted by occasional references to the noble translation of Chapman, and to another, much later, by Ogilby. The great scholar and critic, Bentley, said, "It is a pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer"; and Gibbon declared that it possessed every merit except that of faithfulness to the original. On the other hand, Byron—who almost worshipped Pope—asserted that no one would ever lay down the book except for the original. It is like a rendering in coloured Dresden china of a simple and noble statue or group of statues in Greek marble. If it be read as a purely English poem, no one can fail to be struck by the brilliance, the energy, the flow, and the smoothness of the verse; but its mechanical ease and artificiality render it quite unsuited to give force and expression to the sonorous swell of the Homeric hexameter. The speeches especially are full of spirit; and most of them are magnificent pieces of living rhetoric.

While engaged on his translation of the *Iliad*, Pope found time to produce several minor poems of the most exquisite and finished character; among these were the *Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard*, and the *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*. From the latter may be quoted some of the most pathetic lines Pope ever produced:—

By foreign hands thy dying eyes were closed,  
By foreign hands thy decent limbs composed,  
By foreign hands thy humble grave adorn'd,  
By strangers honour'd, and by strangers mourn'd ! . . .

What though no sacred earth allow thee room,  
 Nor hallowed dirge be mutter'd o'er thy tomb?  
 Yet shall thy grave with rising flowers be drest,  
 And the green turf lie lightly on thy breast:  
 There shall the morn her earliest tears bestow,  
 There the first roses of the year shall blow.

These poems have received warm admiration; but though eloquent, touching, and perfect in execution, they are rhetorical and wanting in that spontaneity, in that touch of absolute sincerity, which belong to the highest order of poetry.

4. *The Dunciad*.—In 1718 Pope had fixed his residence at Twickenham, where he had a pretty house and a large garden on the banks of the Thames. In this house the most eminent statesmen and writers visited him; here Dean Swift spent four months with Pope in the year 1726, and encouraged him to go on with his new idea of writing a *Dunciad*. The *Iliad* (the Tale of Ilion or Troy) had succeeded beyond hope or belief; why not the Tale of the Dunces? The first edition of the *Dunciad* appeared in May, 1728. "Without you," Pope wrote to Swift, "the poem had never been." And it was accordingly dedicated to the Dean:—

O thou! whatever title please thine ear,  
 Dean, Drapier, Bickerstaff,<sup>1</sup> or Gulliver!  
 Whether thou choose Cervantes' serious air,  
 Or laugh and shake in Rabelais' easy chair!

The original hero of the *Dunciad* was Lewis Theobald, a very careful and acute editor of Shakespeare's plays. In the second edition, Colley Cibber, who was then Poet Laureate, takes the place of Theobald as hero, an unenviable eminence to which he was not entitled; the poem, in consequence, is to some extent injured by Pope's allowing his splenetic feelings against Cibber to carry him too far. In an epigram addressed to King George II., Pope lets us know his opinion of Laureates:—

Great George, such servants since thou well canst lack,  
 Oh! save the salary, and drink the sack!

The goddess of the *Dunciad* is Dulness—"the natural foe of the true literary mind; and the true literary mind was typified in Pope

<sup>1</sup> *Drapier*, with reference to the famous letters by "M. B. Drapier," on Wood's copper coinage for Ireland; *Bickerstaff*, from the papers on the almanac-maker Partridge, by "Isaac Bickerstaff."

more strongly than perhaps in any other English author." The poem was a formal declaration of war against the whole tribe of scribblers, scandal-mongers, poetasters, and journalists. The poem closes with these lines:—

Lo! thy dread empire, Chaos! is restored;  
Light dies before thy uncreating word;  
Thy hand, great anarchy! lets the curtain fall,  
And universal darkness buries all!

5. **The Essay on Man.**—The *Essay on Man* appeared in the years 1732—1734. This poem consists of four epistles addressed to Lord Bolingbroke, who had given him the main idea of the poem. It is an attempt "to vindicate the ways of God to man"; it applies pure reason to the miseries and contradictions of human life, and affirms that evil and the appearances of evil arise only from our being able to see, not the whole, but only a small part of the whole. The conclusion and moral of Epistle I. of the poem are given in the lines:—

Submit.—In this, or any other sphere,  
Secure to be as blest as thou canst bear;  
Safe in the hand of one disposing Power,  
Or in the natal, or the mortal, hour. . . .  
And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,  
One truth is clear, Whatever is, is right.

The poem is, as usual, brilliantly written; but the thought is shallow, and the arguments involved and unsatisfactory. "The reasonings in the *Essay*," says Sir Leslie Stephen, "are confused, contradictory, and often childish." But it is the poem by which Pope has been known on the Continent; and it was translated both into French and German.

Much of the poem was written by "paper-sparing Pope," as Swift called him, on the back of letters and old envelopes; and the fragmentary method of composition corresponds with the fragmentary character of the thoughts.

Now backs of letters, tho' designed  
For those who more will need 'em,  
Are filled with hints and underlined,  
Himself can scarcely read 'em.

6. **Satires and Epistles.**—Pope's *Satires* and *Epistles* were his next productions. The *Satires* appeared from 1733 to 1735;

the *Epistles* in 1737 and 1738. The prologue to the *Satires* consists of the famous *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*:—

Friend to my life! (which did not you prolong,  
The world had wanted many an idle song).

This poem is probably the most characteristic of all Pope's works; it shows all his most brilliant qualities. "That Epistle," says Sir Leslie Stephen, "is his *apologia*. In its four hundred lines he has managed to compress more of his feelings and thoughts than would fill an ordinary autobiography." The poem is full of the most sparkling wit and the most perfect lines.

Why did I write? What sin to me unknown  
Dipt me in ink—my parents', or my own?  
As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,  
I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came.  
I left no calling for this idle trade,  
No duty broke, no father disobey'd.  
The muse but served to ease some friend, not wife,  
To help me through this long disease, my life,  
To second, Arbuthnot! thy art and care,  
And teach the being you preserved, to bear.

Of Lord John Hervey, son of the Earl of Bristol, whom he lashes under the name of Sporus, he writes:—

Eternal smiles his emptiness betray,  
As shallow streams run dimpling all the way. . . .  
His wit all see-saw, between *that* and *this*,  
Now high, now low, now master up, now miss,  
And he himself one vile antithesis.

The *Satires* are generally looked upon, from the point of view of diction and versification, as Pope's masterpieces. The *Satires* and *Epistles* were called by Pope "Imitations of Horace." But they have little or nothing of Horace or of his ideas in them; a line in a satire of Horace happens to give merely a starting-point or suggestion. These poems contain some of Pope's best writing and of his most famous compliments—and a compliment from Pope was something to appreciate, for it was rarely given.

Would ye be blest? Despise low joys, low gains;  
Disdain whatever Cornbury disdains:  
Be virtuous, and be happy for your pains.



Manners with candour are to Benson given,  
To Berkley, every virtue under Heaven.

Accept a miracle instead of wit !  
In two dull lines by Stanhope's pencil writ.

It is probable that for short and pithy apophthegms expressed in the choicest and neatest language, Pope stands in the front rank of all English writers. The following are examples :—

What's fame? A fancied life in others' breath,  
A thing beyond us, even before our death.

A wit's a feather, and a chief a rod,  
An honest man's the noblest work of God.

All nature is but art, unknown to thee ;  
All chance, direction, which thou canst not see.

Never elated, while one man's oppressed ;  
Never dejected while another's blessed.<sup>1</sup>

'Tis with our judgments as our watches : none  
Go just alike, yet each believes his own.

Worth makes the man, the want of it the fellow,  
The rest is all but leather or prunella.<sup>2</sup>

Manners with fortunes, humours turn with climes,  
Tenets with books, and principles with times.

Pope's last days were sad and pathetic. His feeble constitution gave way to the long strain of incessant labour and his many literary squabbles. A complication of disorders set in, and, attended by kind friends, he died at Twickenham on May 30th, 1744 ; he was buried in a vault in the church, close to the tomb of his parents.

**7. His Character and Genius.**—Like many remarkable and unremarkable persons, Pope's character was a bundle of striking contradictions. The weakest and most fragile frame was united with the most active and vigorous mind ; the most exacting of masters, he was yet beloved by his servants ; always asserting his independence, he was "always anxious to lean upon some stronger nature" ; a vicious and splenetic foe, he had some of the warmest friends in England ; and he was always a loving and dutiful son. "I never in my life," said Lord Bolingbroke, "knew a man that had so

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin calls this couplet "the most complete, concise, and lofty expression of moral temper existing in English words."

<sup>2</sup> A woollen material, generally black, often used for the uppers of boots.

tender a heart for his particular friends, or a more general friendship for mankind." Of his old mother (who lived till she was ninety) he wrote:—

Me let the tender office long engage,  
To rock the cradle of reposing age;  
With lenient arts extend a mother's breath,  
Make languor smile and soothe the bed of death;  
Explore the thought, explain the asking eye,  
And keep at least one parent from the sky.

Pope is justly celebrated for his skilful and true drawing of types of character. These abound in his *Essays* and his *Satires*. The character of Atossa—the famous Duchess of Marlborough—is one of the most celebrated:—

But what are these to great Atossa's mind?  
Scarce once herself, by turns all womankind!  
Who, with herself, or others, from her birth  
Finds all her life one warfare upon earth:  
Shines in exposing knaves, and painting fools,  
Yet is, whate'er she hates and ridicules. . . .  
Full sixty years the world has been her trade,  
The wisest fool much time has ever made. . . .  
Offend her, and she knows not to forgive;  
Oblige her, and she'll hate you while you live.<sup>1</sup>

The unique merit of Pope, and one for which our literature is chiefly indebted to him, is that he perfected the heroic couplet—a metre "which, for the purposes of didactic and satirical poetry has since remained the chosen vehicle of expression in our language." This form of verse was peculiarly adapted to his genius; and Pope made himself complete master of it. He was a pupil of Dryden; but in the couplet he surpassed his master. The charge that he made poetry "a rimed rhetoric" is a true charge; but its rhetoric is a very brilliant rhetoric. Pope's power of expression within its own limits was unsurpassable; his art, when at its best, was beyond the reach of imitation. As a literary artist and finished workman, he is perhaps surpassed by Thomas Gray alone. Both believed and laboured in the art of pruning and polishing; neither spared time nor pains to achieve perfection. Pope's perfection came from this incessant labour, from the desire to be clear, concise, striking, and correct. His friend Walsh—"Knowing Walsh,"

<sup>1</sup> *Moral Essays*, Ep. ii.

as he calls him—had early pointed out to him that “we never had one great poet that was correct, and he advised me to make that my study and my aim.” Pope laboured day and night to fill that vacant niche in the Temple of Fame—to become a writer of finished verse, to put everything in the neatest way, and to give to every thought its most condensed and epigrammatic expression. He sat, in his own house, or in his garden, or in his grotto, and polished and filed his writings day after day, year in, year out. Nothing was too small to be beneath his notice; he knew that “trifles make perfection, but that perfection is no trifle.” He was never wearied in altering and improving, and almost every line in his works was written twice over. If he was not a great poet, he was a great literary artist. No man could so condense his meaning; no man could give to the expression of it such point and finish. What he aimed at was “condensation, terseness, neatness, finish”; and he succeeded in attaining every one of these qualities. “Every word,” says M. Taine, “is effective; every passage must be read slowly; every epithet is an epitome; a more condensed style was never written.” Pope’s style is always “animated and animating”; but the verse, from the fixed position of the caesura, is always in danger of becoming monotonous. It is too like the regular tramp of well-drilled troops.

“Pope’s best writing is the essence of conversation. It has the quick movement, the boldness and the brilliance, which are the attributes of the best talk. Of course, the apparent facility is due to conscientious labour.”—SIR LESLIE STEPHEN.

8. **Jonathan Swift** (1667—1745) was born in Hoey’s Court, Dublin. His father, who died before his son was born, was steward of the King’s Inns in that city. Swift was educated by his uncle; he went to Kilkenny Grammar School at an early age, and from thence to Trinity College, Dublin. He was not distinguished as a student at the University, and received his degree *speciali gratia*. At this period of his life his prospects were at a very low ebb, and in 1689 he accepted a position as secretary to Sir William Temple, the great diplomatist, then residing at Moor Park, in Surrey.

9. **Life at Moor Park.**—Swift retained this position for a period of about ten years, and by constant study and wide reading repaired

the defects of his education. He also wrote a great deal; and, indeed, he says of himself that he had "written and burned, and written again more on all manner of subjects than almost any man in England." He was not successful in his attempts at verse; and, when he showed one of his poetic productions to his kinsman, Dryden, it was received with a remark which he never forgot: "Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet." The remark was true. Through Temple's aid Swift took an *ad eundem* bachelor's degree at Oxford, after a short residence, and also took the degree of M.A. At Moor Park there resided a child named Esther Johnson, whose mother was a poor relation of the family; Swift became her teacher, and the friendship ripened into the tenderest bonds of affection, especially on the part of Stella, the name conferred on her by Swift. He took orders in 1694, and for a while held the living of Kilroot, near Larne; but he soon returned to Moor Park, and on Temple's death he published his patron's works. Swift returned to Ireland as chaplain to the Deputy, Lord Berkeley, and afterwards got the living of Laracor, near Trim, co. Meath. Here Stella and her friend, Mrs. Dingley, came to reside, and the companionship of the former became the brightest element in the life of Swift, and cheered his dark and gloomy spirit.

It was while at Moor Park, and assisting Temple, that Swift became thoroughly acquainted with the inner workings of English politics. Temple was a man of wide experience in public life, a distinguished diplomatist, a statesman who had been intimate with the last two Stuart kings and was the confidential adviser of William III., and who had taken a part in the highest affairs of state at home, and on the continent of Europe. In the year 1711, when Swift was at the height of his political influence, when Prime Ministers and Secretaries of State called him "Jonathan," listened to his advice, and even to his reproaches, he remembered and recalled his old experience with Temple: "I often think," he says, when speaking of his own friendship with Lord Bolingbroke, "what a splutter Sir William Temple makes about being Secretary of State."

10. *Tale of a Tub*.—His first important prose composition was the *Tale of a Tub*, written in 1696. This, perhaps the greatest of his works, is a satire on the Anglican, Roman, and Presbyterian



Churches, under the name of three brothers, Jack, Peter, Martin. Speaking of it himself in his later years, he exclaimed: "Good heavens! What a genius I had when I wrote that book." It has not the great human interest of *Gulliver's Travels*; but it is even more strikingly original, and it displays more fully the vast compass of his powers. He had himself understood, and indeed foretold, his own powers of satire, when he wrote many years before:—

My hate, whose lash just Heaven has long decreed,  
Shall on a day make sin and folly bleed.

Dr. Johnson said of the *Tale of a Tub*, "There is in it such a vigour of mind, such a swarm of thoughts, so much of nature, and art, and life that I don't believe Swift could have written it."

His next work was the *Battle of the Books* (1697), on the comparative merits of ancient and modern literature. It is purely satirical, and was written for the purpose of supporting Temple, who was drawn into the great "Boyle and Bentley Controversy" on this question.

This famous Controversy originated in France on the respective merits of ancient and modern writers. Sir. W. Temple undertook a defence of the former, and mentioned the *Epistles of Phalaris* as superior to any modern work. A new edition of this work was produced by the students of Christ Church, Oxford, under the nominal editorship of Charles Boyle, grandson of Roger, Earl of Orrery. An attack was made in the preface on Bentley, the King's librarian, who is said to have behaved with some discourtesy in the matter of the loan of a ms. in the library. In a reply to Temple by Wotton, a distinguished scholar of Cambridge, Bentley in a dissertation on the author demonstrates that the *Epistles* were the work of a later age. The scholars of Oxford, provoked at this, produced an apparently crushing "examination" of the dissertation. A year later (1699) Bentley answered with his *Dissertations on the Epistles of Phalaris*, which was the most scholarly critical work written up to that date, and a masterpiece of its kind. Bentley's triumph was complete; and his work had far-reaching results in stimulating true learning and showing the need for research in English scholarship.

11. *Journal to Stella*.—In 1710 Swift was in London urging the claims of the Irish clergy to a remission of the first-fruits and other charges, in which he succeeded after long negotiation; at that time he began to write his *Journal to Stella*. "It was written for one person's profit, and has had indestructible attractiveness for every one since." His letters contain much of what he called the "little language," a continuation of Stella's infantile prattle.

P.D.F.R., or Podefar, stood for Swift himself, as the initials of "Poor, dear, foolish rogue ;" also Presto, a name given to him by the Countess of Shrewsbury. Stella is called Ppt. for "Poppet," or M.D. for "My dear," and so on. Sir Leslie Stephen remarks of this *Journal*: "Swift says that, as he writes his language, 'he makes up his mouth just as if he was speaking it.' It fits the affectionate caresses in which he is always indulging. Nothing, indeed, can be more charming than the playful little prattle which occasionally interrupts the gossip and the sharp utterances of hope or resentment. In the snatches of leisure, late at night or before he has got up in the morning, he delights in an imaginary chat. . . . He caresses her letters, as he cannot touch her hand." When Swift wrote these letters, it was without the faintest thought of publication. There is nothing in our literature at all comparable to Swift's *Journal*, and in none of his works are the extraordinary and varied qualities of his character and genius so fully revealed. He drops in an instant from the gayest and most delightful chit-chat, to epoch-marking incidents of history and secrets of state ; while his flashing wit and personal predilections illumine or destroy a character at a stroke. Permeating all is his affection for Stella, and his need for her love and sympathy, without which the *Journal* could not have been written. The following is an extract :—

"I was at the Queen's chapel to-day, but she was not there. Mr. St. John, lord Bolingbroke's brother, came this day at noon with an express from Utrecht, 'that the peace is signed by all the ministers there, but those of the emperor, who will likewise sign in a few days ;' so that now the great work is in effect done and I believe it will appear a most excellent peace for Europe, particularly for England. Addison and I, and some others, dined with lord Bolingbroke, and sate with him till twelve. We were very civil, but yet when we grew warm, we talked in a friendly manner of party. Addison raised his objections, and lord Bolingbroke answered them with great complaisance. Addison began lord Somers's health, which went about ; but I bid him not name lord Wharton's, for I would not pledge it ; and I told lord Bolingbroke frankly, that Addison loved lord Wharton as little as I did : so we laughed, etc. Well, but you are glad of the peace, you Ppt. the trimmer, are not you ? As for D.D. [Mrs. Dingley, Stella's friend] I don't doubt her. Why, now, if I did not think Ppt. had been a violent Tory, and D.D. the greater Whig of the two ! It is late. Night, M.D."

Much has been written on the subject of Swift's relation with Stella, and the question of their marriage has never been settled, for

no decisive proof of it exists; but there is strong circumstantial evidence that it did take place. His relationship with another Esther, Miss Vanhomrigh, has brought on him much censure. She had a passionate attachment for Swift, and he immortalised her in the poem *Cadenus and Vanessa*, the former word being an anagram for *Decanus* (Dean)—Swift himself. She followed him to Ireland, and took up her abode in her own house at Celbridge, ten miles from Dublin. This complication ended in a letter written by Vanessa to Stella in 1723, which the latter showed to Swift. He rode out to Celbridge, cast the letter down before her, it is said with angry countenance, and departed. He never saw her again, and the unhappy lady died within the year.

12. **Change of Politics.**—Swift's secession from the Whig party has also given rise to much needless criticism and blame. Disgusted with their policy and their treatment of himself, he had joined the Tory party in 1710. The ministers later on told Swift that they had made up their minds to have him on their side, as they had been afraid of nobody but him. In a few months he had worked his way into the innermost circle of politicians, with Harley, Bolingbroke, Somers, Halifax; in fact during this stay in London he was the central figure, not only in the world of letters, but in the world of politics. Pope, Arbuthnot, Addison, Steele, and Gay were among his intimate friends. No English writer ever gained such a position; no representative of the press, no editor of any journal, however powerful, has ever wielded influence so great. Pamphlet after pamphlet came from his pen, in which he lashes his late friends the Whigs with all his mastery of irony, satire, and invective. This powerful advocacy, for which he took no emolument, appeared in the pages of *The Examiner*, and in *The Conduct of the Allies*, *The Public Spirit of the Whigs*, and other pamphlets. But for himself no benefit came to Swift from these important connections, although he was strenuous in the just claims of others. The man who had written *The Tale of the Tub* was considered unfit for a bishopric, and in his lampoon, *The Windsor Prophecy*, he had hopelessly offended the Duchess of Somerset, then all powerful with Queen Anne. Instead of being appointed to an English bishopric, to which he aspired, he was only created in 1713 Dean of St. Patrick's, in

Dublin. His *Journal to Stella* tells the story of the contemptible struggle: "Neither can I feel joy," he writes, "at passing my days in Ireland; and I confess, I thought the ministry would not let me go; but perhaps they can't help it." A year later Harley and Bolingbroke quarrelled, and all Swift's influence failed to mend the breach between them. With the fall of the Tories and the accession of the House of Hanover, Swift's political connection ceased, and he retired to Dublin a disappointed man, and to what to him was banishment.

13. **The Drapier Letters.**—In the year 1724 Swift, ever eager to damage the Whig Government, produced the *Drapier Letters*, a pamphlet which had a most remarkable result. A man called William Wood had received from the Government a patent to supply Ireland with a coinage of copper halfpence; and, as the difference between the intrinsic and the actual value of the copper coinage was enormous, Swift believed he saw in it an attempt to exploit the poverty of Ireland, and was determined to defeat it. He accordingly published the series of famous letters signed "M. B. Drapier." Swift said he would rather be hanged than have his property taxed with seventeen shillings in the pound, at the will and wish of the venerable Mr. Wood. He prophesied that the farmers must rob or beg or leave the country; the shopkeepers in every town must break or starve; the landlord will hoard up all his good money to send to England and keep some poor tailor or weaver in his house, who will be glad to get bread at any rate; and the poor man, who wants a quart of two-penny ale, will have to pay to the publican twenty pence of Wood's money for it. The English Government offered a reward of £300 for the discovery of the author of the fourth letter. A prosecution of the printer was ordered, but the grand jury of Dublin threw out the bill against him; and Swift gained a complete victory. In a letter to Pope a few years later, Swift says that as he walks the streets a thousand hats are lifted to him, and blessings come from all quarters. When he returned from England in 1726 the people ran to the churches and rang the bells. They lighted bonfires on the neighbouring hills, and escorted him with a guard of honour to the Deanery.



14. *Gulliver's Travels*.—This latter visit to England was of importance, for on his return he produced the most popular of all his works, *Gulliver's Travels*, which was published in 1726. "The chief end I propose to myself," said Swift, "is to vex the world rather than to divert it." But he certainly diverted it; for the book has been the delight of young and old for nigh two hundred years. It is one of the most delightful books for children ever written. An Irish bishop said that the book was full of improbable lies; and for his part he hardly believed a word of it. Old Sarah Jennings, the Duchess of Marlborough, was in raptures about it, and could dream and talk about nothing else. She recognised the truth of the satire. She declared that it gave "the most accurate account of kings, ministers, bishops, and courts of justice that is possible to be writ." Thus the book had a two-fold triumph—a triumph as an amusing story and as a magnificent satire. The first two parts have added to the innocent mirth of mankind for generations; but in the fourth part the description of men as Yahoos is a terrible satire upon human nature, and an awful instance of how far that *saeva indignatio*, to use his own words, could carry Swift. Swift, in a letter to Pope, has said: "I heartily hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth"—that is, Swift detested humanity as a race, but was capable of great affection for certain select specimens of it. The satire which describes the quarrels that arose out of the important differences between high boots and low-heeled shoes, upon breaking one's egg at the big or little end, the party intrigues which are settled by the courtiers being ordered to cut capers on the tight rope, are intended to point out the contemptible character of most of the party squabbles of politicians. Swift's mind was of the practical English type; it was highly logical and rational, but wanting in the finer elements of imagination, romance, and emotion which are the essentials of poetry. He wrote much verse—squibs, satires, and epigrams—but all of a mechanical kind, and he speaks of poetry as a "morbid secretion from the brain." He shows, however, great skill in his verse, and handled the octosyllabic metre with much vigour and force. In addition to *Cadenus and Vanessa*, the poem entitled *The Grand Question Debated* and his

lines *On the Death of Dr. Swift* are excellent examples of his varied powers, and perhaps the best of his lighter vein.

15. **His Last Years.**—His last years were filled with darkness and gloom: "it was but the outside shell of him that lived." In the beginning of 1742 it was necessary to appoint guardians of his person and his property. He had spoken of dying in Dublin like a poisoned rat in a hole; his temper turned sour and ungovernable; his habits of parsimony became the hardest avarice. The perpetual vertigo and the deafness, which had at different times tormented him, now became permanent. He could not read, he was a helpless wreck; but during all this time he never talked nonsense or said a foolish thing. He was buried side by side with Stella in his own Cathedral of St. Patrick's, Dublin. Thackeray thus describes the closing scene:—

"He was always alone, alone and gnashing in the darkness, except when Stella's sweet smile came and shone upon him. When that went, silence and utter night closed over him. An immense genius: an awful downfall and ruin. So great a man he seems to me, that thinking of him is like thinking of an empire falling."

In appearance Swift was tall, strong, and well-built; of a dark complexion, an aquiline nose, and black, bushy eyebrows which overarched a pair of strong flashing blue eyes. "His eyes," said Pope, "*are* as azure as the heavens, and with a charming archness in them; but in general they *were* full of sternness and gloom."

If we inquire into the character of Swift we shall find it full of contradictions, far beyond what is the common lot of mankind.

(i) Thackeray says of him: "His journals and a thousand anecdotes of him relate his kind acts and honest and rough manners; his hand was constantly stretched out to relieve an honest man."

(ii) Sir Leslie Stephen also says: "No man had stronger affections than Swift, no man suffered more keenly when they were wounded; no man ever threw himself more heartily into the service of his friends. He declared that in the days of his influence he had done fifty times more for fifty people who had done him no service than Temple had done for him."

He defined a good style as the right word in the right place, and this definition is a not inapt description of his own style. It has three characteristics—strength, clearness, and directness. Many of his apophthegms have got into common use, for example:—

We have just religion enough to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another.

When a true genius appears in the world, you may know him by this infallible sign, that the dunces are all in confederacy against him.

Censure is the tax a man pays to the public for being eminent.

Bread is the staff of life.

Complaint is the largest tribute Heaven receives and the sincerest part of our devotion.

The Stoical scheme of supplying our wants by lopping off our desires is like cutting off our feet when we want shoes.

The thing, fluency of speech in many men and most women is owing to a scarcity of matter and scarcity of words. So people come faster out of a church when it is almost empty than when a crowd is at the door.

16. **John Arbuthnot** (1667—1735), one of the band of great wits, including Pope, Swift, Prior, and Gay, was born in the parish of Arbuthnot, in Kincardineshire, and studied at Aberdeen, Oxford, and St. Andrews. He took a degree in medicine at the last, settled in London, and was appointed physician to Queen Anne in 1705. He was the chief contributor, with Pope and Swift, to the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*, a satirical work on the false tastes in learning of that age. Arbuthnot's chief contributions to literature are, however, the *History of John Bull* and *The Art of Political Lying*. These are characterised by a fine vein of wit and humour, altogether wanting in that savage bitterness which prevails in so much of Swift's writings. The political character of these works gives them little interest for the reader of the present day. The object of the *History of John Bull* was to ridicule the war of the Spanish Succession and the Duke of Marlborough. The war is presented as a law-suit, in which Squire South (Austria), Nicholas Frog (the Dutch), Lord Strutt (Spain), Lewis Baboon (France), and John Bull (England) are engaged. Humphrey Horn (Marlborough) is John Bull's attorney.

John Bull, as he is known to us in the pages of *Punch*, is but a reproduction under varying conditions of Arbuthnot's original creation; and the popular conception to-day, of an individual embodying our insular characteristics, hardly differs from the eighteenth-century prototype:—

Bull, in the main, was an honest, plain-dealing fellow, choleric, bold, and of a very unconstant temper; he dreaded not old Lewis either at backword, single falchion, or cudgel-play; but then he was very apt to quarrel with his best friends, especially if they pretended to govern him; if

you flattered him, you might lead him like a child. John's temper depended very much upon the air; his spirits rose and fell with the weather-glass. John was quick, and understood his business very well; but no man alive was more careless in looking into his accompts, or more cheated by partners, apprentices, and servants. This was occasioned by his being a boon-companion, loving his bottle and his diversion; for, to say truth, no man kept a better house than John, nor spent his money more generously.

17. **Matthew Prior** (1664—1721) was one of the brightest, liveliest, and gayest of the minor poets of the beginning of the eighteenth century. In point of time, he was the first, and, in point of ability, he is probably still the first, writer of what are called *vers de société*. He was educated at Westminster School, under the famous Dr. Busby, and afterwards at St. John's College, Cambridge (the college of Wordsworth). Having become attached to the diplomatic service, he succeeded John Locke as Commissioner of Trade in 1699, and in 1712 was sent as our Ambassador to Paris. Here he became involved in intrigues connected with the succession to the throne of England; Prior was eager to see James III. succeed his half-sister Anne, and this cost the poet two years' imprisonment during the triumph of the Whig Party. He died at Wimpole (the country seat of Harley, the great Tory statesman), in Cambridgeshire. His longest poems are *Alma; or, The Progress of the Mind*, and *Solomon; or, The Vanity of the World*. Both of these are written in what used to be called octosyllabic metre—that is, iambic tetrameter; and the style is modelled on Butler's *Hudibras*. His shorter poems are his best; and his "triumphant caricature" of Boileau's ode on the taking of the fortress of Namur is one of the most sparkling *jeux d'esprit* in the English language. It is to "Mat Prior" that we owe the cessation of the over-wearied couplet of Pope, and the introduction of the gay tripping measure of the anapaestic tetrameter:—

What I speak, my fair Chloe, and what I write, shows  
 The difference there is betwixt nature and art:  
 I court others in verse; but I love thee in prose:  
 And they have my whimsies; but thou hast my heart.  
 So when I am wearied with wandering all day;  
 To thee, my delight, in the evening I come:  
 No matter what beauties I saw in my way:  
 They were but my visits, but thou art my home.



As an epigrammatist he has no superior among English poets. The following epigrams are well known:—

To John I owed great obligation;  
But John, unhappily, thought fit  
To publish it to all the nation:  
Sure John and I are more than quit.

Yes, every poet is a fool:  
By demonstration Ned can show it:  
Happy, could Ned's inverted rule  
Prove every fool to be a poet.

Prior had the charm and lightness and grace of the best French poets; he had gaiety and wit, a certain taking air, and the lightest whimsical touch in metre and in phrasing.

(i) Prior also wrote a version of *The Nut-brown Maid* (see p. 43), which he called *Henry and Emma*. The difference between the style and moral atmosphere of the fifteenth and of the eighteenth century could not be better seen than in these two versions of the same set of events. The following is a verse from Prior:—

And with her stature still her charms increased,  
Thro' all the isle her beauty was confessed;  
Oh! what perfections must that virgin share,  
Who fairest is esteemed where all are fair?

This is simply the decadent and mechanical drone of the rimed-heroic metre, containing little either of nature, or of art, or of human feeling.

(ii) "He turns off with facility little jesting poems on a dinner, a lady; he is gallant, a man of society, a pleasant story-teller, epicurean; in short, he is an accomplished man of the world, as times went, with a correct and flowing style, having at command a light and noble verse."—TAINÉ.

18. **John Gay** (1688—1732) was a Devonshire man, who, when his parents died in reduced circumstances, was apprenticed to a silk-mercator in the Strand. Weary of the shop and the counter, he broke away and obtained the post of secretary to the Duchess of Monmouth. In this position he gave himself to literature, and wrote poems, comedies, and even tragedies. He was the intimate friend of Pope and Swift, and was much beloved by them for himself, for his wit, his good temper, and his good nature. Pope wrote of him:—

Of manners gentle, of affections mild;  
In wit, a man; simplicity, a child.

He is best known for his *Trivia*; or, *The Art of Walking the Streets of London*—a mock-heroic poem; by his *Fables*—in imitation

of La Fontaine, but never coming within reach of the French poet's subtle ease and exquisite art; and by his *Beggar's Opera*—a play which “took the town.” At the end of his life he was received by the Duchess of Queensberry into her house, and petted there. There is genuine poetry in his ballad, “’Twas when the seas were roaring”; and there is also healthy poetic feeling in *Black-eyed Susan*: William, the sailor, says to his wife:—

Though battle call me from thy arms,  
Let not my pretty Susan mourn;  
Though cannons roar, yet, safe from harms,  
William shall to his Dear return.  
Love turns aside the balls that round me fly,  
Lest precious tears should drop from Susan's eye.

The idea of the power of Love turning aside musket-balls is in the fine old-fashioned *rococo* style of the eighteenth century. When, in his *Trivia*, he gives an account of the Thames being frozen over, and of a fair held on the ice, he lapses into the purely mechanical and conventional style of the age:—

Wheels o'er the hardened waters smoothly glide,  
And raze with whitened tracks the slippery tide.  
Here the fat cook piles high the blazing fire,  
And scarce the spit can turn the steer entire;  
Booths sudden hide the Thames, long streets appear,  
And numerous games proclaim the crowded fair.

“The traditional character of Gay, as of a kind of human lap-dog, without any vice except extreme self-indulgence, has been little disturbed. . . . His *Fables* are perennial sense expressed in good, though not quite perennial, verse.”—SAINTSBURY.

19. **Edward Young** (1683—1765) was educated at Winchester School and Oxford, where he became a Fellow of All Souls' College. He wrote several tragedies, and after a varied career took orders and was presented to a living in Hertfordshire. Disappointment in worldly success, and domestic affliction, no doubt intensified in him a tendency to morbid and melancholy reflection. This is shown in his chief work, the *Night Thoughts*, a didactic poem in blank verse; it consists of nine nights, and moralises on “Life,” “Death,” “Immortality,” the “Christian Triumph,” and kindred subjects. It was very popular owing to its serious nature, and the gloomy religious

spirit that pervades it; but it betrays affectation, a straining after effect, an endeavour to create an impression which the poet himself did not feel. Yet he writes with ease, and with a power that recalls Milton, though without Milton's sustained majesty and grandeur. Young had a vivid imagination, a ready aptness for illustration, and a fertility of expression which make many passages and lines linger in the memory. The following will illustrate this:—

Tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy Sleep!  
 He, like the world, his ready visit pays  
 Where Fortune smiles; the wretched he forsakes;  
 Swift on his downy pinion flies from woe,  
 And lights on lids unsullied with a tear. . . .  
 Night, sable goddess! from her ebon throne,  
 In rayless majesty, now stretches forth  
 Her leaden sceptre o'er a slumbering world.  
 Be wise to-day; 'tis madness to defer.  
 Procrastination is the thief of time.  
 All men think all men mortal but themselves.

As if an angel spoke,  
 I feel the solemn sound.  
 And can eternity belong to me,  
 Poor pensioner on the bounties of an hour?

20. **Sir Samuel Garth** (1661—1719) was born in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and educated at Ingleton and Peterhouse, Cambridge. In 1687 he went to Leyden to study physic. He returned to London, and in 1693 was elected a Fellow of the College of Physicians. In the Harveian<sup>1</sup> oration, delivered by him in 1697, he suggested a scheme for establishing a dispensary where the poor could obtain medical advice and prescriptions free of cost. This scheme was defeated by the efforts of the apothecaries of London; and in 1699 Garth published his poem, *The Dispensary*, in support of his views of outdoor medical relief. The poem describes a mock Homeric battle between the physicians and apothecaries. Garth also produced an edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and wrote dedications for other translations of the classics. He was knighted on the accession of George I., and is described by Pope "as the best natured of men."

<sup>1</sup> Harveian, from William Harvey (1578—1657), discoverer of the circulation of the blood.

21. **Thomas Parnell** (1679—1718) was born in Dublin, graduated in 1693 in Trinity College, and seven years later took holy orders. He became a friend of Swift's, and wrote papers for Addison in *The Spectator* and *The Guardian*. In 1713 he published his poetical *Essay on the Different Styles of Poetry*, which gained high encomiums from Swift, but met with little popular success. He contributed four poems to Steele's *Poetical Miscellanies*, and became a member of the Scriblerus Club, to which Pope, Arbuthnot, Swift, and others also belonged. His collected poems were posthumously published, of which one only, *The Hermit*, founded on a tale in the *Gesta Romanorum*,<sup>1</sup> is at all generally known. These poems excited considerable attention at the time of their publication, and had a marked influence not only on Young and Blair, but on Gay, Collins, and Goldsmith.

22. **Thomas Tickell** (1686—1740) was a friend of Addison and a well-known figure in the great literary coterie of Queen Anne's reign. In 1712 he published a poem *On the Prospect of Peace*, which is praised by Addison in *The Spectator*, especially for its sparing use of classical allusions and imagery, then immoderately employed by most writers. He contributed verses to Steele's *Poetical Miscellanies*, and papers to *The Spectator* and *The Guardian*; and in 1715 appeared his translation of the First Book of the *Iliad*, simultaneously with Pope's version of the same. The latter, of course, completely killed the former production. Tickell published occasional *Epistles* and *Odes*; the best known is his *Elegy on the Death of Mr. Addison*, who appointed him his literary executor. In 1724 he obtained the post of Secretary to the Lords Justices of Ireland, under the Viceroyalty of Lord Carteret, and resided at Glasnevin, near Dublin, where he was on terms of friendly intimacy with Swift. He died at Bath in 1740, but was buried at Glasnevin, in which church there is a tablet to his memory. His *Colin and Lucy* was considered by Gray and Goldsmith one of the best ballads in the language.

23. **Allan Ramsay** (1686—1758) was born at Leadhills, Lanarkshire. His family, though in a humble position, was descended

<sup>1</sup> *Gesta Romanorum*, a popular collection of tales in Latin, compiled about the beginning of the fourteenth century.



from the Ramsays of Cockpen, a branch of the Ramsays of Dalhousie, "of an auld descent," as the poet himself says. He was educated at Crawford village school till the death of his mother in 1701, when he was apprenticed by his stepfather to a wigmaker in Edinburgh. On completing his apprenticeship he started in business for himself, and soon attained independence. In 1712 he was one of the founders of the "Easy Club," a Jacobite society, to which he was appointed "laureate"; he cultivated his riming faculties, and issued, from time to time, broadsheets of occasional poems, which were sold at a penny each. About 1716 he abandoned his business of wigmaking for that of bookselling, and published *Christ's-Kirk on the Green*, variously attributed to James I. and James V. of Scotland, to which he added two cantos of his own composition. His shop was soon the favourite meeting-place for the men of letters of the northern metropolis. His collected poems were published by subscription in 1721, and realised four hundred guineas. He also published a volume of *Fables and Tales*, mostly translated from La Fontaine<sup>1</sup> and others; and in 1723 produced the *Fair Assembly*, the most original poem which had yet appeared from his pen. Many traditional ballads and lyrics were collected by him, which he issued from time to time under such titles as *The Tea Table Miscellany*, *Evergreen*, etc., containing many songs of his own composition, which hold a permanent place in popular favour. The best known are *The Yellow-Haired Laddie*, *The Lass o' Patie's Mill*, and *Lochaber No More*. To a copy of *The Evergreen*, which he read as a boy, Sir Walter Scott attributed his earliest impulses towards ballad literature. In 1725 Ramsay produced his pastoral drama, the *Gentle Shepherd*, which at once captured the popular taste; it ran through ten editions in a quarter of a century, and was performed on the stage in Edinburgh in 1729. In 1730 Ramsay ceased to write, and in 1755 retired from business; he died at the age of seventy-two, and was buried in Old Grey Friars' Churchyard, where there is a monument to his memory. His poems, while failing to attain any high level of refinement or imaginative faculty, possess, nevertheless, the genuine poetic note of

<sup>1</sup> Jean de La Fontaine, born 1621, died 1695. The most noted French writer of fables.

truthfulness to life. His lyrics are often coarse, but are yet instinct with humour; and all through his work runs a vein of rural jollity characteristic of the peasant life which he depicts. The work of Allan Ramsay forms the connecting link between the Scotch writers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and their great successor Robert Burns, and indeed his influence on the latter cannot be overlooked.

The following are two stanzas from a song in *The Tea Table Miscellany* :—

O Sandy, why leaves thou thy Nelly to mourn?  
Thy presence would ease me  
When naething could please me;  
Now dowie<sup>1</sup> I sigh on the bank of the burn,  
And through the wood, laddie, until thou return.  
Though woods now are bonny, and mornings are clear,  
While lavrocks<sup>2</sup> are singing,  
And primroses springing,  
Yet nane o' them pleases my eye or my ear,  
When through the wood, laddie, ye dinna<sup>3</sup> appear.

---

<sup>1</sup> doleful.    <sup>2</sup> skylarks.    <sup>3</sup> do not.

## CHAPTER XVI.

---

### ADDISON AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

1. **First Newspapers.**—It is difficult for us, in an age remarkable for the multiplicity of newspapers and journals of every class and kind, to realise what life was at a time when these did not exist. Until the commencement of the eighteenth century no daily paper existed in the United Kingdom, and the great stream of journalistic publications of our time can be traced to very small and very poor beginnings. Before the great Civil War of the seventeenth century, items of news were issued occasionally; but during it a number of weekly papers appeared, such as *The English Post*, the rival *Mercuries*, and others. *The London Gazette*, which still exists, appeared in 1665, while the Court was at Oxford; and in 1680 Sir Roger Lestrangle, who had previously published papers, was made Censor of the Press. *The Daily Courant* was started in 1709, and was the first daily newspaper that appeared in the United Kingdom. A few years earlier Daniel Defoe, an indefatigable news-writer, had published *The Review*, which appeared three times weekly. But the papers which met the great social want of the time, and which ran more on the lines of the literary journals of our own day, were *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, both founded by Richard Steele, though the latter journal is more notably connected with the name of Joseph Addison.

2. **Joseph Addison** (1672—1719), one of the greatest masters of English prose, was born at Milston, near Amesbury, Wiltshire, the son of the Rev. Lancelot Addison, afterwards Dean of Lichfield. At the age of fifteen he entered Queen's College, Oxford, and was afterwards elected Fellow of Magdalen. A finished Latin scholar,

and an ardent student, he was yet of a shy, reserved temperament, and of a thoughtful and speculative turn of mind. Addison was intended for the Church, but having attracted the attention of Charles Montague, a patron of learning (afterwards Lord Halifax, and leader of the Whig party), he was presented with a pension of £300 to travel abroad. This was done chiefly with the view of strengthening the Whig party with a young literary aspirant. Addison made excellent use of the opportunities thus afforded; he visited France, Switzerland, Italy, and Germany, acquiring new stores of knowledge and experience of life, the fruits of which were fully reaped in his writings of later years. In the fourth book of the *Dunciad* Pope satirises a "young Æneas" and his travels abroad, who is presented to Dulness, and whom she "frees from the sense of shame":—

Intrepid then o'er seas and land he flew;  
Europe he saw, and Europe saw him too . . .  
Tried all *hors-d'œuvres*, all liqueurs defined,  
Judicious drank, and greatly daring dined;  
Dropped the dull lumber of the Latin store,  
Spoiled his own language, and acquired no more.

On the death of William III., Addison's pension ceased and he returned home, to gain in 1704 his first real literary triumph. The Ministry, anxious to celebrate the great victory of Blenheim in verse, through the recommendation of Halifax committed its composition to Addison, and *The Campaign* appeared. It was immediately successful; it pleased the Ministry and caught the public taste. The poem received its full—in fact excessive—measure of praise, largely due to the following happy passage:—

'Twas then great Marlborough's mighty soul was proved  
That in the shock of charging hosts unmoved,  
Amidst confusion, horror, and despair,  
Examined all the dreadful scenes of war. . . .  
So when an angel by Divine command  
With rising tempests shakes a guilty land,  
Such as of late o'er pale Britannia past,  
Calm and serene he drives the furious blast;  
And pleased th' Almighty's orders to perform,  
Rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm.

For the support the poem gave the Whig Ministry, Addison was



rewarded with a post worth £200, and from this onward, while the Whigs were in power, his career was highly successful, and he finally rose to be Secretary of State. He became member of Parliament, but his diffidence prevented him ever taking part in debate. In 1709 Addison became secretary to Lord Wharton, who was appointed Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and during his residence in Dublin he contributed his first essays to his friend Steele's venture, *The Tatler*.

3. **Richard Steele** (1672—1729) was of Anglo-Irish parentage, like Swift, Congreve, Goldsmith, Sterne, and Burke, one of the group that fills so prominent a place in the literary and political history of the eighteenth century. Steele was born in Dublin, but spent little time in Ireland, for his father, who was an attorney, died when his son had reached the age of five. Through the influence of the Duke of Ormond, Steele gained admission to Charterhouse in 1684, where he formed a friendship with Addison which was practically life-long, and one of the most fruitful that the history of literature can show. After a period of five years at school, Steele went to Oxford, first to Christ Church, and soon after to Merton, where he stayed three years. At this time the country was deep in war, and the young student was attracted to a more stirring life than the meadows of Oxford afforded. He enlisted in a regiment of Horse Guards then commanded by Ormond, but soon received a commission in the Coldstream Guards, and was afterwards promoted to be captain in the Fusiliers, his military career lasting about twenty years.

The first work of Steele's that attracted attention was *The Christian Hero*, written in 1701, "to fix," as he says, "upon his own mind a strong impression of virtue and religion in opposition to a stronger propensity towards unwarrantable pleasures." That this moral and religious work was composed in all sincerity we can, judging from the tone of his later essays, have no doubt, and none knew the temptations of barrack life better than Steele. Wayward and impulsive himself, yet with an earnest desire to do right, Steele's whole life was a struggle against that kindness of heart and nature which too often led him to err; he was most imprudent in money matters, was constantly in debt, and thus suffered from all the worry and

trouble that debt entails. In the next four years Steele wrote the comedies *The Funeral*, *The Lying Lover*, and *The Tender Husband*; but these were not a success on the stage. The public who appreciated the dramas of the Restoration were not prepared to receive with approbation plays that moved on a higher plane of morality; the taste of the time had yet to be improved by the good sense and delicate satire of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. Steele now entered fully into the field of politics, and received from the Government the editorship of *The Gazette*, an office which gave him the opportunity of utilising news in a new venture, and the result was *The Tatler*, which he started in 1709. The public about that time had been kept amused by Swift and other wits in the predictions of "Isaac Bickerstaff," an assumed name, in which the death of Partridge, a noted impostor, astrologer, and almanack maker, was announced. This was in due time so circumstantially described that Partridge in vain tried to prove he was alive, and to arrest the consequent damage to his trade in duping the public. Steele assumed the name of "Isaac Bickerstaff" in addressing his readers through the pages of *The Tatler*.

4. *The Tatler*.—The purpose of *The Tatler* Steele expounds in the first number: "This paper is to expose the false arts of life; to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity, and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse, and our behaviour." It appeared three times weekly, at the price of a penny, and at once attained a decided measure of success; its publication may be said to mark definitely the beginning of modern journalism.

Addison was in office in Ireland when *The Tatler* appeared, but he soon began to contribute to its pages; this help Steele warmly acknowledged, saying, indeed, "I was undone by my auxiliary," and that he "could not subsist without dependence on him." The paper ran for one year and nine months, and in 1710, on the fall of the Whig Ministry, Addison lost his office, worth £2,000 a year; but Steele was left his Commissionership of Stamps, on the understanding that he was not to write against the new Government. He brought *The Tatler* to a close, and announced a new daily paper soon to be published.

5. *The Spectator*.—On March 1st, 1711, *The Spectator* appeared. Politics were excluded in the new journal; it was to deal with literature, matters of taste, and social life; its success was immense, and it was read throughout the length and breadth of the land. The character sketches in *The Spectator* have delighted every generation of readers since they were created, and Sir Roger de Coverley is a permanent figure in the gallery of literary portraits. The paper ran through 555 numbers, and ceased in December, 1712. It was published in seven volumes, and extended by Addison to an eighth, which contains some of the finest of his essays.

(i) Of the 271 essays in *The Tatler*, Steele appears to have written 188; Addison, 42; and both together, 36. Of 555 essays in *The Spectator*, Addison was responsible for 274; and Steele, 236.

(ii) "It is scarcely too much to say that these papers, and especially *The Spectator*, taught the eighteenth century how it should, and especially how it should not, behave in public places, from churches to theatres; what books it should like, and how it should like them: . . . ; and it is still a little astonishing to find with what docility the century obeyed and learnt its lesson."—SAINTSBURY.

6. *Addison's Cato*.—In 1713 Addison produced the tragedy of *Cato*, which was a success for the time, but soon failed to hold its position on the stage. Addison was entirely devoid of dramatic genius; he had grace, irony, subtlety, and delicate humour in describing character; but he had no strong imaginative sympathy with the deep passions of men and women, or the tragic actions to which they lead. He wanted force; he was deficient in the higher creative dramatic faculty, and in the power of analysing the motives which govern the actions and mould the characters of men. The character of Cato in Addison's play is a cold abstraction, giving utterance in correct but unimpassioned language to philosophic sentiments. The best that can be said of the play is what Pope wrote in the prologue to it:

Virtue confessed in human shape he draws,  
What Plato thought, and godlike Cato was;  
No common object to your sight displays,  
But what with pleasure heav'n itself surveys,  
A brave man struggling in the storms of fate,  
And greatly falling, with a falling state.

The play is filled with sententious maxims that are frequently quoted, like—

'Tis not in mortals to command success,  
But we'll do more, Sempronius, we'll deserve it.

A day, an hour, of virtuous liberty  
Is worth a whole eternity in bondage.

The woman that deliberates is lost.

Where vice prevails, and impious men bear sway,  
The post of honour is a private station.

7. **Last Years.**—Soon after the cessation of *The Spectator*, Steele issued *The Guardian*, but, as has been said, "it began in dulness and ended in a tempest of faction." Addison started in 1715 *The Freeholder*, in support of the House of Brunswick; he again obtained office, married the Countess of Warwick, and in 1717 was appointed one of the Secretaries of State. One of the most amiable and beloved of men, he yet had an unfortunate quarrel with Pope, no doubt due to the jealousy and envy of the poet. It is to this difference that we owe the famous satire on Addison in Pope's *Epistle to Arbuthnot*:—

Blest with each talent and each art to please,  
And born to write, converse, and live with ease . . . .  
Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,  
Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike . . . .  
Dreading e'en fools, by flatterers besieg'd  
And so obliging, that he ne'er oblig'd;  
Who but must laugh, if such a man there be?  
Who would not weep, if Atticus were he?

Steele had during this time become a vigorous and eager politician and pamphleteer; he sat in Parliament as member for Stockbridge, and was expelled from the House for the publication of a pamphlet called *The Crisis*. The political strife in which he was engaged drove him farther apart from Addison, and the last few years of the latter's life were embittered by a quarrel with the friend of so long standing. Steele was twice married; on the accession of George I. (1714) he was knighted, and became patentee of Drury Lane Theatre, worth £1,000 a year; but, in spite of all his emoluments, he was invariably in monetary difficulties. His quarrel with Addison



was over a peerage bill on which a great political controversy raged. Johnson remarked on the estrangement between the two friends over a political issue, "Why could not faction find other advocates?" Addison died in 1719, and we are told that on his death-bed he sent for his step-son, the Earl of Warwick, who was leading an unsteady life, and said to him, "See in what peace a Christian can die." To this the poet Tickell refers in his elegy on his friend:—

He taught us how to live, and oh! too high  
The price of knowledge, taught us how to die.

Addison was buried in Westminster Abbey, amid the grief of his friends and the regret of the nation. Steele felt his death keenly, and poured forth his feelings of love, admiration, and respect to his memory in a letter to Congreve, prefixed to the comedy of *The Drummer*, which had been written many years before by Addison, but published now for the first time. Steele survived him ten years, and passed through many trials and difficulties. At last he gave up the struggle, and retired to an estate left him by his second wife at Caermarthen, and died there in 1729.

**8. Addison and Steele: An Estimate.**—The lives and work of Steele and Addison naturally lend themselves to comparisons, and such have been drawn many times, and too often unfairly. Steele has suffered much from the sketches of Macaulay and Thackeray, well-intended as that of the latter may be, in which his faults and weaknesses are unduly, though picturesquely, emphasised.

Few writers have gained so great an eminence in their own time as Addison, an eminence retained in succeeding generations, though we to-day take a more moderate, and perhaps more correct, estimate of his greatness. Of the immense influence he exerted on literature and life there can be no question. Though his genius was not of the higher creative and imaginative kind, yet his powers were so great, his mind so well-balanced and regulated, that his parallel can hardly be found in the whole history of English literature. In personal character, and in high moral qualities, Addison reached an exceptionally high standard. His aim as a writer was to raise the tone of public life, and correct the vitiated taste in literature and art, by daily lessons of wisdom and good sense, with a

sweetness of note hitherto unknown in English letters. He was as much the enemy of "dulness" as Swift and Pope; but his method of warfare was very different; for, unlike the latter, he set up no pillory for dunces; nor, after the manner of the former, did he rank the mass of mankind as Yahoos, and below the level of the brute kind. Against the coarseness, rude tastes, and lack of refinement in contemporary life he spoke with the true tone of a moralist, yet with a moderation and judgment that disarmed criticism, and brought the lessons home to the hearts of men. His humour is of the subtlest and most delicate kind; his wit is keen, but kept in check by a noble temper and perfect sanity of judgment. His essays—perfect in style, in well-balanced musical language—may seem trite and commonplace in thought to us, accustomed as we are to the more aesthetic and transcendental criticism of to-day. But Addison wrote to suit an age artificial in the extreme, when the greatness of *Paradise Lost* was as little appreciated as the charm of the romantic ballad of *Chevy Chase*. But succeeding generations are indebted to Addison for enforcing truer canons of taste in literature, life, and art, and for establishing a more correct standard of literary criticism. The poverty of thought in his critical essays has been unduly emphasised; to judge Addison aright, the qualities of his genius and his work must be taken as a whole; for his intellectual range was wide, and no writer of his time shows a greater catholicity of taste.

(i) "It is justly observed by Tickell that he (Addison) employed wit on the side of virtue and religion. He not only made the proper use of wit himself, but taught it to others; and from his time it has been generally subservient to the cause of reason and of truth. He has dissipated the prejudice that had long connected gaiety with vice, and easiness of manners with laxity of principles. He has restored virtue to its dignity, and taught innocence not to be ashamed."—DR. JOHNSON.

(ii) "In our own time, his image (Addison's), skilfully graven, appeared in Poets' Corner. . . . Such a mark of national respect was due to the unsullied statesman, to the accomplished scholar, to the master of pure English eloquence, to the consummate painter of life and manners. It was due, above all, to the great satirist, who alone knew how to use ridicule without abusing it; who, without inflicting a wound, effected a great social reform, and who reconciled wit and virtue, after a long and disastrous separation, during which wit had been led astray by profligacy, and virtue by fanaticism."—MACAULAY.

As an essayist, Steele is remarkable for the vivacity, the ease, and the humour, of his writing; but he lacks that grace and polish of style so characteristic of Addison. He is a social humorist; and he depicts in his essays in *The Tatler*, *The Spectator*, and *The Guardian* the manners and customs, the characters of the fine ladies and gentlemen, the whole farrago of life in the age of Anne. No subject came amiss to him: he was a journalist, a story-teller, a critic, a satirist, and a little of a philosopher. Much of his work is inextricably interwoven with Addison's; it was a literary partnership of the eighteenth century, much like that of Beaumont and Fletcher in the seventeenth, or like that of Erckmann-Chatrian in the nineteenth. The great contribution made by Steele to the "humanity" of his time was his true and ardent admiration for women. "His breast," says Thackeray, "seems to warm and his eyes to kindle when he meets with a good and beautiful woman, and it is with his heart as well as with his hat that he salutes her." Of Lady Elizabeth Hastings he said that "to love her was a liberal education." His papers are also noteworthy for their inventiveness—of character, as well as of incident. This, together with the dramatic spirit and liveliness of the dialogue, and a certain light airy movement in his descriptions, makes his essays readable to this day; and of late years there has been a decided tendency to a higher appreciation of the work of Steele. The following extract from *The Guardian* is a good specimen of his manner of handling social subjects:—

It is a most vexatious thing to an old man, who endeavours to square his notions by reason, and to talk from reflection and experience, to fall in with a circle of young ladies at their afternoon tea-table. This happened very lately to be my fate. The conversation, for the first half-hour, was so very rambling, that it is hard to say what was talked of, or who spoke least to the purpose. The various motions of the fan, the tossings of the head, intermixed with all the pretty kinds of laughter, made up the greatest part of the discourse. At last, this modish way of shining, and being witty, settled into something like conversation, and the talk ran upon fine gentlemen. From the several characters that were given, and the exceptions that were made, as this or that gentleman happened to be named, I found that a lady is not difficult to be pleased, and that the town swarms with fine gentlemen. A nimble pair of heels, a smooth complexion, a full-bottom wig, a laced shirt, an embroidered suit, a pair of fringed gloves, a hat and feather, any one or more of these and the like accomplishments ennoble a man, and raises

him above the vulgar, in a female imagination. On the contrary, a modest, serious behaviour, a plain dress, a thick pair of shoes, a leathern belt, a waistcoat not lined with silk, and such like imperfections, degrade a man, and are so many blots on his escutcheon. I could not forbear smiling at one of the prettiest and liveliest of this gay assembly, who excepted to the gentility of Sir William Hearty, because he wore a frieze coat, and breakfasted upon toast and ale.

"What Steele with his keen sympathy and 'veined humanity' found in 'conversation'—to use the eighteenth-century term for commerce with the world—the delicate lapidary skill of his more placid and introspective companion turned in the study into those gems of graceful irony which, if only by reason of their style and polish, must outlive more ambitious performances. They are faultless in their art, and in this way achieve an excellence which was beyond the range of Steele's quicker and more impulsive nature. But for words which the heart finds when the head is seeking; for phrases glowing with the white heat of a generous emotion; for sentences which throb and tingle with manly pity or courageous indignation, we must go to the essays of Steele."—AUSTIN DOBSON.

9. **George Berkeley** (1685—1753), Bishop of Cloyne, a profound philosopher and master of English prose, was, like so many writers of the eighteenth century, the child of English parents who lived in Ireland. He was educated at the Grammar School, Kilkenny, and at the age of fifteen entered Trinity College, Dublin, of which he was afterwards made a Fellow. He took orders, was created Dean of Derry in 1724, and ten years later was promoted to the bishopric of Cloyne, in the south of Ireland, where he resided for eighteen years, beloved by all who knew him. He had long cherished a scheme "for converting the savage Americans to Christianity, by a college to be erected in the Summer Islands, otherwise called the Isles of Bermuda." A royal charter was granted; Berkeley set sail, but directed his course to Rhode Island, where he landed in 1729. Here he wrote the liveliest and most readable of his works, *Alciphron; or, The Minute Philosopher*, published in 1732—written, it is said, in a cave on the sea-shore of Rhode Island. Sir Robert Walpole, the minister of the day, had promised him £20,000 towards his scheme; but the promise was never kept, and Berkeley returned to England. One of his sons went to study at Oxford, and he took a house in that city to be near him; but, disapproving of the habits of some bishops residing out of their dioceses, he offered to resign his see, which was worth £1,400 a year. But the King would not



hear of it: "The good Berkeley," he said, "shall die a bishop, and he may live where he likes." He died in Oxford in 1753. +

Of his other works, the *Principles of Human Knowledge* appeared in 1710; *Hylas and Philonous* was written in 1713, a felicitous little series of Platonic dialogues directed against the deists and the professors of materialistic philosophy. In *Siris* (1744) he advocated the virtues of tar-water; but the work contains profound reflections and trains of thoughts on idealism, in which he shows himself an ardent disciple of Plato; the style of the work is as remarkable as the depth and subtlety of its metaphysics. He was something of a poet as well as a mathematician and a philosopher; and it is to him we owe the celebrated lines in his prophetic *Verses on the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America*:—

Westward the course of empire takes its way;  
The four first acts already past,  
A fifth shall close the drama with the day;  
Time's noblest offspring is the last.

Berkeley set forth and explained the subtlest philosophical ideas with unrivalled grace, lucidity, and charm; and his terms are always used with accuracy, self-consistency, and precision. He was not only a great philosopher, an admirable stylist, but he was a zealous bishop and a true Christian gentleman. Pope says of him: "To Berkeley every virtue under heaven"; and Atterbury, a man not given to undue enthusiasm for his fellow-men, says: "So much understanding, so much knowledge, so much innocence, and such humility, I did not think had been the portion of any but angels, till I saw this gentleman."

Steele had persuaded him to write in *The Guardian*; and the following is from one of his papers in that journal:—

#### THOUGHTS IN WESTMINSTER SCHOOL.

Upon the late election of king's scholars, my curiosity drew me to Westminster School. The sight of a place where I had not been for many years revived in my thoughts the tender images of my childhood, which by a great length of time had contracted a softness that rendered them inexpressibly agreeable. As it is usual with me to draw a secret unenvied pleasure from a thousand incidents overlooked by other men, I threw myself into a short transport, forgetting my age, and fancying myself a schoolboy.

This imagination was strongly favoured by the presence of so many young boys, in whose looks were legible the sprightly passions of that age, which

raised in me a sort of sympathy. Warm blood thrilled through every vein; the faded memory of those enjoyments that once gave me pleasure put on more lovely colours, and a thousand gay amusements filled my mind.

It was not without regret that I was forsaken by this waking dream. The cheapness of puerile delights, the guiltless joy they leave upon the mind, the blooming hopes that lift up the soul in the ascent of life, the pleasure that attends the gradual opening of the imagination and the dawn of reason, made me think most men found that stage the most agreeable part of their journey.

"A crystalline clearness, a golden eloquence, a supreme urbanity, a mixture of fancy and logic . . . a preciseness of phrase which is never dull or dry; a felicity of ornament and illustration which never condescends to the popular or trivial . . . an incapacity of petulance, and an omnipresence of good breeding—these are the characteristics of the style of Berkeley."—  
SAINTSBURY.

10. **Lady Mary Wortley Montagu** (1689—1762) was born in London, the daughter of the Duke of Kingston. She married, in 1712, Edward Wortley Montagu, who became English Ambassador at Constantinople. Though she had Bishop Burnet for a tutor, she received no systematic education, but was allowed to browse freely in a large and well-stocked library. In later years she wrote: "I never studied anything in my life, and have always (at least from fifteen) thought the reputation of learning a misfortune to a woman." But she taught herself Latin, and was always a great reader. She belonged to the world of polite letters of which Pope was the centre, and is now chiefly remembered for her quarrels with that irritable genius, who satirised her under the name of "Sapho," in the coarsest and most unpardonable manner. While living at Pera (the suburb opposite Constantinople) she learned the Turkish practice of inoculation, and was the chief means of introducing it into England, having first tried the experiment on her son. As a letter-writer she has hardly ever been excelled, and her *Letters from Turkey*, published surreptitiously in 1763, at once established her reputation, and attracted great attention, because everything in Turkey was to her perfectly fresh and new. Her style is sparkling and brilliant, full of wit and vivacity. She has a wide intellectual grasp, and has all the experience of a thorough woman of the world; hence her pictorial descriptions of persons and things are lively, lucid, and easily realised. The following passage is from the *Letters from Turkey*:—

## THE FAIR FAVOURITE.

All things here were with quite another air than at the Grand Vizier's ; and the very house confessed the difference between an old devotee and a young beauty. It was nicely clean and magnificent. I was met at the door by two black servants, who led me through a long gallery between two ranks of beautiful young girls, with their hair finely plaited, almost hanging to their feet, all dressed in fine light damasks, brocaded with silver. I next entered a large room, or rather pavilion, built round with gilded sashes, which were most of them thrown up, and the trees planted near them gave an agreeable shade, which hindered the sun from being troublesome. Jessamines and honeysuckles twisted round their trunks, shedding a soft perfume, increased by a white marble fountain playing sweet water on the lower part of the room, which fell into three or four basins with a pleasing sound. The roof was painted with all sorts of flowers, falling out of gilded baskets, that seemed tumbling down. On a sofa, raised three steps, and covered with fine Persian carpets, sat the Kiyâya's lady, leaning on cushions of white satin, embroidered ; and at her feet sat two young girls, the eldest about twelve years old, lovely as angels, dressed perfectly rich, and almost covered with jewels. But they were hardly seen near the Fair Fatima (for that is her name), so much her beauty effaced everything. I have seen all that has been called lovely either in England or Germany, and I must own that I never saw anything so gloriously beautiful, nor can I recollect a face that would have been taken notice of near hers. . . . I was so struck with admiration, that I could not for some time speak to her, being wholly taken up in gazing. That surprising harmony of features ! that charming result of the whole ! that exact proportion of body ! that lovely bloom of complexion unsullied by art ! the unutterable enchantment of her smile ! But her eyes !—large and black, with all the soft languishment of the blue ! every turn of her face discovering some new charm.

11. **Anthony Ashley Cooper** (1671—1713), third Earl of Shaftesbury, is the most noted of the school of moralists of the eighteenth century, known as the "English Deists." He was a pupil of Locke, from whose philosophy he departed, but his views, ethical standard, and style were largely coloured by the writings of Plato. His style is strictly classical, though often marred by an affectation of manner ; his taste is highly refined, and his writings are characterised by a warmth of feeling and general optimism. He largely influenced the thought of his own day, and to him Pope's *Essay on Man* is chiefly due. His main contribution to English literature is his *Characteristics*, a collection of his earlier treatises, and published in 1711.

12. **Henry St. John** (1678—1751), Viscount Bolingbroke, was another of the same school, but a shallow thinker both on religion and philosophy. His brilliant meteoric career belongs to history ;

his splendid talents, his personal attraction, his oratorical gifts, exercised an extraordinary influence over those with whom he came in contact. Selfish, treacherous, and profligate, few men have, however, earned such emphatic condemnation from his contemporaries and posterity. To Walpole he was a perjured villain, to Dr. Johnson a scoundrel and a coward, and to Lady Mary Montagu a vile man ; while the historians of our own time find little in his career to redeem his personal character from these estimates. To him Pope dedicated his *Essay on Man*, and its philosophy is partly due to the views propounded by Bolingbroke. His most noted contributions to English literature are his *Letters on the Spirit of Patriotism* and his *Idea of a Patriot King* (1749). His style is lucid, but lofty and pretentious, and often rambling and discursive.

13. Another writer of this age who earned a questionable notoriety as a philosophic writer was **Bernard Mandeville** (1670—1733), a Dutch physician, who took up his residence in London. His chief title to fame is his *Fable of the Bees*, which ran through many editions, increasing in bulk as it grew in age. Its nature may be gathered from its second title, *Private Vices Public Benefits*. His coarseness and low standard of morality are the very opposite of Shaftesbury, against whose ethical principles he levelled his shafts of satire and ridicule. Berkeley attacked both writers in *Alciphron*.

Two other writers claim notice, whose surnames are the same and are often confounded. **Thomas Burnet** (1635?—1715), Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, and Master of the Charterhouse, is noted as the author of *Telluris Theoria Sacra* (The Sacred Theory of the Earth), an imaginative and picturesque account in four books of The Deluge, Paradise, The Burning of the World, and The New Heaven and the New Earth. His style has all the glow, fervour and rhetoric of the theologians of the previous generation. **Gilbert Burnet** (1643—1715), friend of William III. and Bishop of Salisbury, wrote a *History of his Own Time*, published after his death. It is full of gossip and poor in style ; though Burnet's strong attachment to the Court colours the work, yet it is accurate and has a distinct value as a record of contemporary events. Burnet also wrote a *History of the Reformation*, and an *Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles*, long a famous work.



## CHAPTER. XVII.

---

### THE NOVELISTS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

1. **The Novel.**—The history of the novel in the world of letters is an interesting study to which many considerable volumes have been devoted. Its vicissitudes in English literature alone previous to the eighteenth century require a few words of summary.

We have seen the influence of the Italian novel on the Elizabethan drama, and its peculiar English form in the hands of Lyly. Sidney's *Arcadia* and Greene's *Pandosto* may be said to have naturalised the romantic novel in England ; but the superior popularity of the acted drama gave but little encouragement to the writing of romances. The prevalence of French influence at the Restoration introduced the long-winded heroic romance modelled on *Le Grand Cyrus*. Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery, was the most successful imitator of the French school in his *Parthenissa* (1665). Crowne produced one romance, *Pandion and Amphigenia*, and Congreve another, *Incognita*, (already referred to) ; but these never took firm hold of the popular taste. Mrs. Behn indeed succeeded in attaining a more life-like style by drawing on her own varied experience ; and Bunyan, in his wonderful allegory, gave a new model for a successful tale. Perhaps, however, the germ of the modern novel may be more clearly discerned in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* than in any contemporary work of narrative fiction, but in a shape as yet formless and incoherent. As a story-teller pure and simple, few have equalled and none have surpassed the man who is justly regarded as the founder of the English novel, Daniel Defoe.

2. **Daniel Defoe** (1661—1731), or more properly Daniel Foe, was

the son of a butcher in Cripplegate, London, and was originally intended for the Dissenting ministry, but turned his attention to business, and in 1685 started as a hose-factor in Cornhill. He had previously taken part in Monmouth's rebellion; and his chequered career affords a romance as genuine as the life of his great creation, Robinson Crusoe. Defoe was indeed a man of the widest, most varied, and most startling experiences. He was everything by turns—a rebel, a merchant, a manufacturer, a journalist, a pamphleteer, a secret Government agent (to bring about the Union of 1707), a newspaper editor, and a bankrupt—and through all this always an adventurer. He says of himself in the following lines—

No man hath tasted differing fortunes more,  
For thirteen times have I been rich and poor.

3. **His Career.**—In his *Complete English Tradesman* also he points to himself as a beacon of warning; he bids the beginner in trade to imitate the carrier's waggon, "which keeps wagging and always goes on," and "as softly as it goes" can yet in time go far. In 1688 Defoe, as might have been expected, hastened to join the Prince of Orange, and was one of "a royal regiment of volunteer horse" who attended William and Mary from Whitehall to the City. In 1692 occurred his first failure in business; but two years later he had started a brick and tile factory at Tilbury, and was endeavouring to pay off his outstanding debts. He had been for some time a writer of pamphlets in the Whig interest, when an attack on the King and his Dutch favourites in a lampoon entitled *The Foreigners* called forth his famous retort, *The True-Born Englishman*. His verse shows the same blunt, vigorous, straightforward style that is so marked a feature of his prose. "A foreigner," exclaims Defoe of the King, whom he had always strenuously defended; "who are you English people that you should make a mock of foreigners? You are the most mongrel race that ever appeared upon the face of the earth!"

A true-born Englishman's a contradiction,  
In speech an irony, in fact a fiction. . . .  
These are the heroes that despise the Dutch  
And rail at new-come foreigners so much,—

Forgetting that themselves are all derived  
 From the most scoundrel race that ever lived ;  
 A horrid crowd of rambling thieves and drones,  
 Who ransacked kingdoms and dispeopled towns :—  
 The Pict and painted Briton, treacherous Scot,  
 By hunger, theft, and rapine hither brought ;  
 Norwegian pirates, buccaneering Danes,  
 Whose red-haired offspring everywhere remains ;  
 Who joined with Norman-French compound the breed  
 From whence your true-born Englishmen proceed.

The English people did not resent this description of themselves ; they only laughed. "Of all the nations of the world," said Defoe himself, "there is none I know of so entirely governed by their humour as the English" ; and in this, as in so many other instances, their humour was good humour. Towards the close of 1702 Defoe issued a pamphlet which made more noise than any publication of the century, *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. His "shortest way" was to pass a law that "whoever was found at a conventicle should be banished the nation, and the preachers be hanged." "The light foolish handling of them by mulcts, fines, etc., 'tis their advantage. Now let us crucify the thieves." This, from a Dissenter, was of course ironical ; but the extreme Tory party, the "High-fliers," as they were called, took it in all seriousness, and were loud in their applause. When they learned their mistake, they were furious at the trick. The pamphlet was brought under the notice of the House of Commons, and ordered to be burnt at the hands of the common hangman ; Defoe himself was sentenced to pay a fine of two hundred marks, to stand three times in the pillory, and to be imprisoned during her Majesty's pleasure. Defoe took his place in the pillory<sup>1</sup> ; but the author of *The True-Born Englishman* was a favourite with the London populace, who—instead of, as usual, saluting the victim with volleys of mud, stones, rotten eggs, and dead cats—hung the pillory with garlands, threw bunches of flowers towards him, and drank his health in tankards

<sup>1</sup> Pope has the line—

"Earless on high stood unabashed Defoe,"—

but this is quite incorrect : his ears were never cropped, and he had no reason to be abashed or unabashed ; he had done nothing to be ashamed of.

of ale and loving-cups of wine. Defoe went further: he wrote *A Hymn to the Pillory*, in which occur the spirited lines:—

Tell them the men who placed him here  
Are scandals to the times,  
Are at a loss to find his guilt,  
And can't commit his crimes.

While a prisoner in Newgate he started a bi-weekly newspaper, *The Review*, written wholly by himself. Defoe is thus not only the true founder of the English novel, but one of the earliest of all English journalists. In 1704 he was released from prison, as he says himself, upon "capitulations," to write nothing displeasing to the Government; but really, as has been conclusively established by his latest biographer, Mr. William Lee, as a secret Government agent, keeping up to the public the pretence of honest bluntness, while he drew the pay alternately of Whig and Tory ministries, and adroitly deceived all three. In 1706 Defoe was employed in Scotland as a secret agent to assist in the passing of the Act of Union; and doubtless, by his astute acquisition of local information transmitted to the Government at home, he did much to bring about the peaceable settlement of that burning question. Meantime Defoe pursued his devious course as a journalist, providing the public with news on subjects of general or passing interest, and, when accurate information failed or was unprocurable, supplying the deficiency from his wondrous store of ready invention. Thus it was that he drifted imperceptibly into the writing of fiction. Beginning as a satirist, he became successively a political pamphleteer, an historian of political changes in which he had himself taken an active though humble part, a recorder of events, partly true, partly fictitious, in the lives of real personages, soon to glide into the narrator of purely visionary occurrences in the lives of creatures of his own imagination. For beyond doubt his *forte* was story-telling; he had "the art of forging a story and imposing it on the world for truth"; so that Lord Chatham took his *Memoirs of a Cavalier* for sober history, and a modern African explorer his *Captain Singleton* for an authentic account of travels in Central Africa. His first extensive attempt at this kind of fictitious narrative was his account of the Great Storm of November,



1703 (the storm commemorated in Addison's *Campaign*), which was based on numerous letters, possibly genuine, sent by eye-witnesses to him in his cell in Newgate Prison. Defoe was thus always ready to take advantage of a lucky chance or a favouring breeze. If any prominent person died or did anything to attract public attention, Defoe was ready with a "life," even with an "autobiography," if he thought that would stimulate the public taste, of the celebrated or notorious person. In this way he produced lives of Charles XII. and Peter the Great, of Rob Roy, Jonathan Wild, and Jack Sheppard. The London public was keen—then as now—to hear stories about ghosts, about supernatural visitations, about the other world. Defoe gratified their appetite with *The True Relation of the Apparition of one Mrs. Veal*<sup>1</sup> the next day after her Death to one Mrs. Bargrave at Canterbury; with *The Secrets of the Invisible World disclosed; or, A Universal History of Apparitions*, and other works of a similar character. The English public has ever hungered since the days of Mandeville and Hakluyt for tales of foreign lands, and *Captain Singleton* anticipates Dr. Livingstone in crossing Africa from sea to sea, and the *Owke Mouraski* flits shadowy across the frozen steppes of Russia. Historical details have a fascination for many, and the *Memoirs of a Cavalier* light up with pseudo-reality a corner of the great Civil War, while the *Journal of the Plague in 1665* gives a horribly vivid picture of that awful visitation. Defoe finds his readers interested in the doings of thieves and miscreants in his lives of *Jack Sheppard* and *Jonathan Wild*, and a whole gallery of portraits, male and female, and mostly disreputable, starts into being in *Colonel Jack*, *Lady Roxana*, *Captain Avery*, and *Moll Flanders*.

4. **Robinson Crusoe.**—But above them all stands his supreme creative effort in fiction. Account for it how we will, *Robinson Crusoe* has remained and will doubtless always remain a classic alike with young and old. The public for whom Defoe wrote were wondering and credulous children of a larger growth; his great work has never lost its foremost place in the affections of

<sup>1</sup> The ghost wore "a scoured silk gown." "Did she?" cried a neighbour, "then you have seen her indeed, for none but Mrs. Veal and myself knew that the gown was scoured."

the actual children of five generations. Founded in part on the real experience of Alexander Selkirk, a native of Fife, who had led, for four years, the solitary life of a castaway sailor on the island of Juan Fernandez in the South Pacific, Defoe was little indebted to his original for the incidents in the life of his fictitious hero. Robinson Crusoe's island was in the Atlantic, in the estuary of the Orinoco, and his picture of Friday is an accurate portrait of a Carib. The style of the book is that of a first-rate *raconteur*—simple, straightforward, vigorous, realistic. It constitutes Defoe's greatest literary achievement, the triumph of "that natural infirmity of homely plain writing," as he himself describes his style. Besides this, Defoe possessed an enormously retentive memory, and a wealth of circumstantial invention. But he had higher qualities; he possessed a creative genius—the power to make his characters live, to make their actions real. He avoids subtle emotions; his personages are commonplace and their doings never outside the ordinary course of common events; one feels as if every incident of the story might happen to oneself.

The moral of *Robinson Crusoe* is the need of "invincible patience under the worst of misery; indefatigable application and undaunted resolution under the most discouraging circumstances"—an excellent and most practical moral. We have said that this masterpiece is the classic of childhood; it has excited no less the admiration of the critics. "*Robinson Crusoe*," says Marmontel, "is the first book I ever read with exquisite pleasure, and I believe every boy in Europe might say the same thing." "Was there ever," says Dr. Johnson, "anything written by mere man that was wished longer by its readers, except *Don Quixote*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and *The Pilgrim's Progress*?" "All ages and descriptions of people," says Charles Lamb, "hang delighted over the *Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, and shall continue to do so, we trust, while the world lasts." "Never," says Taine, in his *History of English Literature*, "was art the tool of a more moral or more thoroughly English work."

5. *Journal of the Plague*.—Defoe was at once the most voluminous and the most interesting writer of the century. Lamb considers that his secondary novels possess an interest not

inferior to *Robinson Crusoe*; but without acquiescing in this verdict, flatly contradicted by the opinion of readers ever since, we cannot refrain from a word of praise of his wonderful *Journal of the Plague*, with its gruesome details, its skill in selecting telling incidents—the dead-cart, the plague-pit, the signs in the heavens, the sudden lamentable cries—in all of which he displays his fullest powers as a realist. Even in our own day it is impossible to read it without a haunting sense of that dreadful calamity, more oppressive than that of contemporary disasters with whose actual details we are perfectly familiar.

The last years of Defoe are shrouded in mystery. In 1729 he went into hiding, owing to some complication more probably political than pecuniary. He makes vague charges against his son, to whom he had transferred his property, and it is plausibly conjectured that his mind had given way. Be this as it may, after nearly two years of homeless and friendless wandering, he died (1731) of a lethargy in a lodging in Ropemakers' Alley, Moorfields.

Defoe may be said to have forestalled many modern theories, notably the doctrines of Free Trade. The following is his opinion regarding the education of women: "A woman of sense and manners is the finest and most delicate part of God's creation; the glory of her Maker, and the great instance of His singular regard to man, His darling creature, to whom He gave the best gifts either God could bestow or man receive. And it is the sordidest piece of folly and ingratitude in the world to withhold from the sex the due lustre which the advantages of education give to the natural beauty of their minds. A woman well-bred and well-taught, furnished with the additional accomplishments of knowledge and behaviour, is a creature without comparison; her society is the emblem of sublime enjoyments; her person is angelic, and her conversation heavenly."

6. **Samuel Richardson** (1689—1761).—The "Father of the English Novel," as Richardson is often called, was born in Derbyshire, the son of a joiner. In his early youth he was taught to read and write, and no more. At the age of seventeen he was sent to London as apprentice in a printing establishment. By diligence and courtesy he gradually rose until he found himself head of a large business of his own, printer of the Journals of the House of Commons, Master of the Stationers' Company, and King's Law Printer. As a child he was a letter-writer; and at the early age of thirteen he happened to become the confidant of

some of the young women of the neighbourhood, who induced him to write their love-letters for them. In this way he gained a first-hand and intimate knowledge of the feelings of a woman's heart; and it is on this foundation that his work as a novelist rests. From this time he became an inveterate letter-writer; his novels are written in the epistolary form, and suffer from it. "Twenty letters," says Taine, "of twenty pages do not display a character; but one brilliant saying does." When he was fifty he undertook to write a small book of model letters; the idea of a separate story arose, and *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740), was the result. "*Pamela*," says an historian, "became the rage of the town; ladies carried the volumes with them to Ranelagh Gardens,<sup>1</sup> and held them up to one another in triumph." It was written in about three months, and five editions were exhausted in the course of the first year of its publication. *Pamela* is an excellent example of the *bourgeois* novel; the interest in the character of the heroine is genuine in her early trials; but when she becomes too conscious of her own attractions, and her self-interest is aroused, sympathy with her wanes. Her struggle becomes less one for virtue than for matrimony, a struggle in which she succeeds. This was immediately taken advantage of by Fielding, who made excellent use of the opportunity of ridiculing it in the opening chapters of *Joseph Andrews*.

In 1747 the first two volumes of *Clarissa* appeared; it was written, he says, with the object of showing "the distresses that may attend the misconduct of parents and children in relation to marriage," which has been a favourite theme with novelists ever since. *Clarissa* is Richardson's greatest work, and is one of the masterpieces of English fiction. Nothing but the genius of the author could have sustained through interminable pages an interest in the weary struggle of the heroine, prolonged for a period of eleven months. In Lovelace, Richardson has created a character that stands unrivalled, as the most brilliant and most unprincipled libertine in all fiction. *Clarissa* was read everywhere, and, as has been said, "the little printer's book set all England sobbing," while the great critics of France and Germany loudly echoed its praise.

<sup>1</sup> Ranelagh was not opened until 1742.



In Richardson's third and last novel, *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) he attempted, as he says, to describe "a man of true honour"; but the result was not satisfactory: the author was not at his ease with such a fine gentleman. Owing to his business life and habits, he lacked that personal knowledge of the society in which his hero moved, which might have enabled him to depict it accurately. The book is full of faults; it is tedious, too long, and has too much fine talk. The hero, though skilfully drawn, with all Richardson's minuteness of detail, is too frigidly perfect, too immaculate, and the reader wearies of the talk and doings of this fine prig and his bevy of lady worshippers.

In his novels, Richardson's method is to build up a character by an enormous number of subtle strokes and minute details, a species of literary etching, until one gets to know the personage better than one knows one's own acquaintances. His experience had given him an extraordinary knowledge of feminine character; this knowledge was as accurate as it was thorough; and in the death of *Clarissa Harlowe* and the madness of *Clementina della Porretta* he rises to a great height of tragic pathos. His novels were written in the intervals of business, chiefly at his little country residence at Fulham; but, all unknown to himself, he was, in point of fact, creating a perfectly new kind of literature. His style is without distinction, heavy, diffuse, involved, and long-winded; he seems never to know when he has done; but the age fell in love with his elaborate and careful analysis of feeling and sentiment. "Something entirely new," says Mr. Gosse, "was wanted to amuse the jaded mind of Europe, and that new thing was invented by the fat little printer of Salisbury Court."

(i) Richardson's novels are the longest that exist in any literature. *Clarissa* runs through eight closely printed volumes.

(ii) "By thoroughly believing in his work, and giving all his mind to it, Samuel Richardson, as novelist, secured the full attention of his readers, and sometimes even by importunity of tediousness, by the drop after drop that in time hollows the stone, compelled his readers to see as he saw, to feel as he felt, and not seldom to weep where he wept—and he wept much himself—over the sorrows of *Clarissa*."—HENRY MORLEY.

7. **Henry Fielding** (1707—1754), one of the greatest novelists in English literature, was born at Sharpham Park, in Somersetshire.

His father was General Fielding, who had served in the great Marlborough campaigns. The boy was educated at Eton, where he read hard in the Greek and Latin classics; and he afterwards spent some time in the study of law at the University of Leyden.

8. **His Plays.**—Obliged to leave at the age of twenty, with an allowance from his father which was never paid, and "with no choice but to be a hackney writer or a hackney coachman," Fielding preferred the former, and gave up his time to the writing of plays, his first production being a five-act comedy entitled *Love in Several Masques*. This was acted at Drury Lane in 1728, and was well received. In this and his next succeeding play, *The Temple Beau*, the influence of Congreve is apparent. Fielding did not, however, confine himself to one style of dramatic writing. He produced *The Author's Farce*, as a prelude to *A Puppet Show*, intended to satirise the then fashionable pantomime; and the former gives a vivid picture of the hapless lot of the man of letters by profession, or literary hack, in the hands of his tyrant the publisher. For some years Fielding continued to produce plays, many of them of some merit, of which one only now lives in the popular memory—namely, the amusing burlesque of *The Tragedy of Tragedies; or, The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great*. This has taken rank as no unworthy sequel to Buckingham's *Rehearsal*; it is a general parody on the ordinary stage tragedies, and full of particular hits, among them the well-known one on the ludicrous line in Thomson's *Sophonisba*, "O Huncamunca, Huncamunca O!" Of this play Swift has said that he "had not laugh'd above twice" in his life, once at a merry-andrew, and again when Tom Thumb killed the Ghost. At the age of twenty-eight Fielding married; and, coming into possession at the same time of a small estate, he settled in the country. Easy-going and extravagant, he set to work to get through his own property and his wife's fortune; and he soon succeeded. Horses, hounds, showy liveries, open house, expensive wines, quickly accomplished this.

9. **His Novels.**—When his lands and fortune were "gone and spent," he returned to London to study law, and was called to the Bar in 1740. In that year there had appeared Richardson's novel of *Pamela*; its sentiment and calculating morality were offensive to Fielding, a man

of very different fibre from Richardson, for he was a man of the world and of typical English common sense. In 1742, Fielding conceived the idea of writing a novel in imitation and in mockery of it; this he called *Joseph Andrews*, representing Joseph as the brother of Pamela; it gave Richardson great offence, and filled him with indignation and resentment. But Fielding quickly grew tired of the narrow and cramping limits of mere parody; and, after the first few chapters, Richardson and his ideas disappear. The book, he states, is "written in imitation of the manner of Cervantes"; but the burlesque is not maintained after the first few chapters, and the characters move in their own free way across the broad stage of comedy. The central figure is Parson Adams, a delightful creation, and an odd mixture of eccentric manners and simplicity, of piety and learning, generosity, courage, and a want of knowledge of the world. In this character, it is indeed true that Fielding is somewhat after "the manner of Cervantes" in the immortal Don Quixote.

In 1743 Fielding published three volumes of *Miscellanies*, important chiefly as containing *A Journey from this World to the Next*, a somewhat amorphous work, in which Julian the Apostate is introduced at some length under many changes of character, and the *Journey* suddenly ends in the story of Anne Boleyn. The third volume consists of *The History of Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great*, in which he parodies the "heroic biography" in the *Life* of this notorious ruffian, who had been hanged at Tyburn some eighteen years previously. The book is well written, but in a decided vein of bitter and unpleasant realism, quite at variance with Fielding's usual healthy, vigorous, and humorous temperament.

✓ In 1748, through the influence of Lord Lyttleton, Fielding was made a magistrate for Westminster and Middlesex, and took up his residence at Bow Street; and in 1749 was published his greatest work, *Tom Jones*. The book is full of colour, movement, and change of scene, and forms a brilliant picture of the open-air, healthy, vigorous life of the eighteenth century in country, town, and village. The interest never flags, and the characters—typical of every social class—are drawn with a firm hand and the irresistible strokes of a great creative genius. Squire Western and Sophia, Mr. Allworthy and Partridge, are permanent figures in the gallery of

fiction, though none equal Parson Adams, the greatest of Fielding's creations. In *Tom Jones* the survey of life is wider and more profound than in *Joseph Andrews*, and the comedy richer; and it is hardly too much to say that as a graphic representation of contemporary life and character it is the greatest of English novels.

In 1751 appeared the tenderest, sweetest, and most human of all his novels, *Amelia*, the chief character in which is modelled on that of his own wife, Charlotte Cradock. It is tinged, however, with a note of melancholy, and lacks the buoyant spirits and humour so abundantly displayed in his two earlier novels. This was due to failing health, though he shows no decline in mental power, and to a sadder and more serious attitude of mind which bodily weakness contributed towards his survey of life.

In the year 1753 his health, which for many years had not been good, completely gave way, owing chiefly to his heavy labours as a magistrate; he was attacked by a complication of symptoms, the most dangerous of which was dropsy. A journey to a warm climate was ordered, and Fielding started from the Thames in June, but did not reach Lisbon till August. His *Voyage to Lisbon* is an interesting book for its personal details, and a true index to his character. He never came back, for he died at Lisbon in the beginning of October, 1754. He had been very anxious about his children; but his half-brother and an intimate friend (Mr. Ralph Allen, who figures in *Tom Jones* as Squire Allworthy, and who had presented the novelist with £200 before he had even made his acquaintance) stepped in and sheltered their lives from want and anxiety, the latter providing liberally for their education, and bequeathing to each of them at his death a sum of £100. Pope mentions Allen in the well-known lines:

Let humble Allen, with an awkward shame,  
Do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame.

Byron styles Fielding "the prose Homer of human nature," and his knowledge of it, and all its eccentricities, was only less wide and accurate than that of Shakespeare, or of Walter Scott. His position as a country gentleman, and his life as a rural squire, afforded materials for his Squire Western and his other country characters,



from lords to gamekeepers ; while his experience as a magistrate, and his acquaintance with wits and dandies about town, gave him an intimate knowledge of the middle as well as of the lower and the criminal classes.

(i) "The young man's wit and manners made him friends everywhere ; he (Fielding) lived with the grand Man's Society of those days ; he was courted by peers and men of wealth and fashion. . . . He admires with all his heart good and virtuous men, stoops to no flattery, bears no rancour, disdains all disloyal arts, does his public duty uprightly, is fondly loved by his family, and dies at his work."—THACKERAY.

(ii) "To take up Fielding after Richardson is like emerging from a sick room heated by stoves into an open lawn on a breezy day in May."—COLERIDGE.

(iii) "This powerful genius, frank and joyous, loves boorish feasts like Rubens ; the red faces, beaming with good humour, sensuality, and energy, move about his pages, flutter hither and thither, and jostle each other, and their overflowing instincts break forth in violent actions."—TAINÉ.

10. **Tobias Smollett** (1721—1771), youngest of the great trio who may be said to have definitely shaped the modern novel, was born in Cardross parish, Dumbartonshire. His father was the youngest son of Sir James Smollett, and died in the boy's childhood. The son was educated at Dumbarton and at Glasgow University, and was apprenticed to John Gordon, a medical practitioner in Glasgow. In 1739 he started, like many another ambitious Scotch lad, for London, with some knowledge of medicine, a few letters of recommendation, a light purse, and the manuscript of a tragedy in his pocket. The latter, a work of little merit, dealing with the assassination of James I. of Scotland, was declined by the theatrical managers ; and Smollett fell back on his medical credentials, which sufficed to obtain for him the post of surgeon's mate on board one of the men-of-war then fitting out against Spain. Here he served for four years, and acquired that knowledge of naval affairs so conspicuous in his novels. While on the West Indian station he met his future wife, the daughter of a planter at Kingston, Jamaica. He returned to London in 1744, and established himself as a surgeon in Downing Street. As a married man, he found it necessary to supplement his professional income by the efforts of his pen. The success of the writings of Richardson and Fielding turned his

attention to fiction; but he adopted as his model the picaresque<sup>1</sup> novel, and himself admits that he produced his first work, *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, published in 1748, in direct imitation of the *Gil Blas* of Le Sage, which had been completed in 1735. A strong autobiographical element is apparent in *Roderick Random*, although the hero of the book has little to show in the way of redeeming qualities. The birth, education, and naval experiences of its hero closely correspond with those of the author; indeed, so little is the creative faculty displayed in the works of Smollett that we may well believe that, but for his early adventures, he would have been little better than an adapter of the works of others. Nowhere else, however, do we get at first hand so graphic and valuable a picture of life in the English navy as in this book, while Tom Bowling, Mr. Morgan, and Jack Rattlin are the first, and not the least, in the great gallery of characters in naval fiction. Smollett's keen observation, also has given to his writings that originality which is wanting in those of his French model, Le Sage.

The pronounced success of his first novel determined Smollett henceforth to devote his energies to literature. Before producing his next work he travelled to Paris with his friend Dr. John Moore, afterwards author of *Zeluco*, and Smollett's own editor and biographer. His journey and experiences afforded many characters and incidents for *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*, a novel longer than *Roderick Random*, but disconnected in plot, and disfigured by personal satire. Commodore Trunnion and Jack Hatchway are striking creations, and the book, unpleasant as the picture is, adds immensely to our knowledge of the eighteenth century. The incidents and personages are bewildering, and we are introduced to the company of many sorry rascals; the hero has little to recommend him but brute courage, and Scott is not far wrong in calling him "the savage and brutal Pickle." One more novel, *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom*, a

<sup>1</sup> The founder of what is known as the *Novela picaresca*, or picaresque novel, was Don Diego Mendoza, born in Granada (circa 1503), whose *Lazarillo de Tormes* contains the life and adventures of a supposed Spanish adventurer. This was followed by the *Guzman d'Alfarache* of Mateo Aleman, and imitated in French by Le Sage, in his well-known *Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane*, afterwards translated by Smollett. The novel is so named from the principal person being a *picaro*—that is, a rascal, knave, or rogue.

poor imitation of Fielding's *Jonathan Wild*, appeared in 1753, before Smollett turned to other literary labours. For the next ten years he became a bookmaker and translator, producing his *History of England*, for which he is said to have been paid in all £2,000, translations of *Don Quixote* and *Gil Blas*, and many articles in contemporary reviews. He also edited many works, to some of which he himself contributed; and produced one successful naval comedy, the *Reprisals; or, The Tars of Old England*, performed in Drury Lane in 1757, Garrick himself appearing as Zara on the first night of representation.

In 1763, owing to his incessant literary labours, Smollett's health broke down; he travelled for two years in France and Italy, and three years after his return was again compelled to go abroad, and resided in Leghorn till his death in 1771. While there he completed *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, described by Sir Walter Scott as "the last and, like music sweetest in the close, the most pleasing of Smollett's works of fiction." In this the influence of Sterne and a broader and kindlier view of men had mellowed much of the hardness of his earlier work; the fun is less boisterous, but the characters are more human. The book is written in the epistolary form, and describes the incidents met in travel by a family through Britain. The characters are admirably drawn, and Matthew and Tabitha Bramble, Winifred Jenkins, and Lismahago are figures among the least likely to be forgotten, of those which Smollett has placed upon his immense canvas. Smollett's style is clear and lucid, and he writes with vigour and ease. His contribution to English literature owes its importance mainly to his having acclimatised the picaresque novel, the novel of personal adventure, with its purely external treatment of life. This enabled him to give us a life-like picture of scenes which came under his own observation; and if few of his characters take place with those of Fielding as personalities in our memories, his vivacious incidents are only debarred by their coarseness from becoming generally popular.

11. **Laurence Sterne** (1713—1768) was born at Clonmel, in Ireland, the eldest son of an ensign of a foot regiment which had been ordered there from Dunkirk, only to be disbanded the day after

its arrival. His father was the grandson of an Archbishop of York, and the grandmother of Laurence had been a considerable heiress. Laurence Sterne was, like his brothers and sisters, always delicate, and they probably owed much of this delicacy to the fact that, as children of an ensign, they were, on the re-enrolment of their father's regiment, knocked about, "always on the move," ill-fed and worse lodged; now in York, again in Dublin, now in Exeter or Plymouth, only to take ship at Bristol again for Ireland. But, as some set-off against the hardships of his early life, we must remember how much Sterne owes to the keen observation of these years in his greatest creations, *Uncle Toby* and *Corporal Trim*. So far Smollett and Sterne are alike, and the characters of the latter derive their vigour and vitality mainly from their author's personal recollections and experiences. At ten years of age Laurence was at length settled at a school near Halifax, of which one of his uncles was a governor. Here he remained for eight years; and, on the death of his father in 1731, he was sent by his relatives to Jesus College, Cambridge; of this college his great-grandfather had been Master, and in it he had founded scholarships, to one of which Laurence was elected. He took his bachelor's degree in 1736, and went to reside with an uncle, a canon residentiary of York Minster. The young man was probably employed at first by his uncle as a political pamphleteer, but afterwards took holy orders, and was presented to the living of Sutton-on-the-Forest in the North Riding. Here he spent an uneventful life, until, in his forty-seventh year, he burst on the literary world as the author of the *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gent.*, the first two volumes of which he published in York in 1760. Few books by an unknown author have ever excited such a sensation. It was attacked by local censors, and lauded by the critics in the metropolis. Sterne at once proceeded to London, and alighted from the York mail to "find himself famous." Within twenty-four hours of his arrival his lodgings were besieged by fashionable visitors, he had as many invitations to dinner as would have sufficed for his short remaining lifetime, and became, in fact, the literary "lion" of the hour. "My rooms," he writes, "are filling every hour with great people of the first rank, who strive who shall most



honour me." Two more volumes were published in London the following year (1761), and copies were bought up as fast as they could be issued. "One half of the town," he says, "abuse my book as bitterly as the other half cry it up to the skies—the best is they abuse and buy it, and at such a rate that we are going on with a second edition as fast as possible." *Tristram Shandy*, which extends to nine volumes, was completed in the year 1767. Early in 1762, alarmed by the state of his health, Sterne left for the Continent; and in Paris he again found himself surrounded by flatterers and admirers. "My head is turned," he wrote to his friend Garrick, "with what I see, and the unexpected honour I have met with here." We may attribute to Sterne's constitutional delicacy much of his extreme sensitiveness, his sentimentality, and his perpetual desire for change of air, scenery, and society.

Sterne's other and less famous book, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, is supposed to be written by Mr. Yorick, who is Sterne himself; it contains much of his own experience of travel in those countries, with lively and humorous sketches of old inns, monks, valets, postilions, English travellers, beggars, landlords, soldiers, abbés, and ladies. In it occurs the well-known expression—

God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,

which, however imperfect as a statement of fact, is often accepted as a quotation from Scripture. This is the more finished work of the two; there is a wider field for the display of his peculiar powers, and he shows a rare delicacy of touch in response to the slightest incident or peculiarity of character that struck his sensitive and observant eye. But the sentiment and the open display of feeling which pervade it are foreign to the English mind, and the book is less popular than *Tristram Shandy* with the majority of critics and readers. Sterne also produced two volumes of *Sermons*, but these discourses are singularly wanting in reverential spirit. Some of them are dull; some are brilliant essays on mundane affairs, written in a thoroughly mundane spirit. The poet Gray thus characterises their effect on the reader's opinion of their author: "You often see him tottering on the verge of laughter, and ready to throw his periwig in the face of the audience."

But if Sterne were irreverent—a defect we should not expect to find in the case of a clergyman—it can be pleaded for him that he was no worse than his neighbours.

After more than two years on the Continent Sterne returned to his Yorkshire living, and continued his great work; but in the autumn of 1765 his cough again obliged him to seek a southern climate, and he travelled slowly from Paris by Lyons to Turin, Milan, and Florence, and finally pushed on to Naples, where he spent the winter. He was back in Yorkshire in June, 1766, and spent the following year between his parsonage and London. Early in 1768 consumption had declared itself. In February he writes from London of "this vile influenza," which proved to be pleurisy, to which he succumbed on March 18th.

**12. His Style.**—*Tristram Shandy* has excited the admiration, and called forth the laughter and the tears of many generations of readers. There are few writers in the English language who can make so much out of so little as can its author. However small his material, he can spin from it a web, delicate, charming, and always humorous. Literary spinners have been divided into the classes of silkworms and spiders—"those who spin because they are full, and those who do so because they are empty." But Sterne unquestionably belongs to the genus "silkworm," and his thread, however fine, is always strong and well-spun; indeed, Carlyle classes Sterne with Cervantes among the great humorists of the world; of no English writer can it be more truly said that "the style is the man," and of all his style is the most whimsical. A late biographer, H. D. Traill, describes it as "uniformly eccentric, regularly irregular," and his mode of expressing himself as "destitute of any pretensions to precision, and in many instances a perfect marvel of literary slipshod." It is as near an approach to talking, to the talk of an agreeable and humorous man, as any writing can well be; "we forget we are reading and not listening"; in fact, it is a fine and subtle colloquial style. He enters into the very inmost soul of his characters, and he displays with perfect truth the lightest movement of their minds and hearts. Mr. Shandy, Uncle Toby, and Corporal Trim are among the immortal creations of fiction.

*Tristram Shandy* is chaotic, without a plan, inconsequent and perplexing to a degree. But in these very defects may be said to lie its excellence and attractiveness. Though the sudden and whimsical turns of thought and incident, the digressions, the display of learning, the play of fancy and imagination, the blending of the pathetic with the odd and grotesque, may tantalise the reader, yet the interest is kept alive by Sterne's never-ending humour, self-conscious and artificial as it often is. A brilliant *ignis fatuus*, we follow him in his erratic caperings and wanderings, leading us we know not whither. Sterne's great fault—a fault difficult to excuse, much more to defend—was his want of delicacy; only too often and most needlessly does he overstep the verge of modesty. His sentiment, too, is forced and artificial; while his moralisings fail to appeal to our feelings for want of the note, or true ring, of sincerity. Yet this prevailing tone of sentiment had a widespread effect, not only in England, but also on the Continent of Europe. It acted as a corrective not only to the coarseness of Smollett and his school, but to the brutality which characterised so much of the life of the eighteenth century.

13. **Oliver Goldsmith** (1728—1774), one of the most charming writers in our literature, was born at Pallas, a hamlet in the county of Longford; he was the son of a poor curate, who came originally from the South of England. Oliver was the sixth of a family of nine; at the age of eight he was attacked by confluent small-pox, which disfigured his face with life-long scars. He was first sent to a dame's school; and the dame was in the habit of saying, "Never was there so dull a boy." His next teacher was Paddy Byrne, one of Marlborough's old soldiers, whose mind was stored with a large stock of stories—of land and sea, of his own and other people's adventures—with old Irish ballads and fairy tales; and it is probably from Byrne that young Goldsmith gained his love of story-telling. After an education in several country schools, he obtained, at the age of sixteen, a sizarship<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A size was originally an allowance of provisions. King Lear (II. iv. 178) complains of his daughters as "scanting his sizes"—that is, cutting down the provisions for his servants. "The sizars paid nothing," says Macaulay, "for food and tuition, and very little for lodging; but they had to perform some menial services from which they have long since been relieved. They swept

in Trinity College, Dublin, where the conditions of holding it were very different from what they are now; the sizar then had to perform certain menial offices in return for rooms and commons. At college Goldsmith was idle, thoughtless, unpunctual, and disorderly. Want of money was his besetting trouble, and his shifts to raise it were many, among them writing street ballads, for which he got five shillings apiece. He suffered from the tyranny of his tutor, a certain Mr. Wilder, a man of coarse manners and brutal passions; and, one evening, when Goldsmith was entertaining some of his friends, Wilder entered the room, struck his pupil, and even knocked him down in the presence of his guests. Next morning Goldsmith sold his books, left the college, and wandered about the country. His brother Henry found him, gave him a new suit of clothes, and carried him back to college, where he remained until he took his degree in 1749.

14. **His Travels.**—On leaving college he received £50 from his uncle Contarine, who had always been his friend, to enable him to study law in Dublin: the whole of this went at the gaming-table. His next move was to Edinburgh in 1752, where he studied medicine for a year and a half. It now appeared to him that his knowledge of medicine would be improved by foreign travel. His uncle lent him £20, and he embarked for Bordeaux. The ship was driven by a storm into Newcastle-on-Tyne; on board were several Scotsmen who had been illegally engaged in enlisting other Scotsmen for service in the French army; Goldsmith was in their company; and the whole of them were arrested and thrown into prison, where they lay for a fortnight. Meanwhile, their ship had sailed; and Goldsmith went on board a vessel bound for Rotterdam. From thence he made his way to Leyden, where he attended the University for about a year, with periodical terms of study and idleness.

In February, 1755, Goldsmith started on "the grand tour," but on foot; he had a guinea in his pocket, and, beyond the clothes he stood in, his only possession was a flute. As he wandered through

the court; they carried up the dinners to the fellows' table, changed the plates, and poured out the ale of the rulers of the society." A sizarship now has nothing servile and no sense of inferiority attached to it; it is like a scholarship, but usually not so valuable.



France, he now and then earned a night's lodging and food by playing on his flute to the dancing of the peasants; to this he refers in the lines—

How often have I led thy sportive choir,  
With tuneless pipe, beside the murmuring Loire! . . .  
Yet would the village praise my wondrous power  
And dance, forgetful of the noontide hour.

Not only France, but Germany, Switzerland, and Italy were visited by the wandering minstrel. At Padua he is said to have obtained his medical degree. In France his flute had often procured for him a welcome, a supper, and a bed; but in Italy he found almost every peasant a better musician than himself. He accordingly fell back on an ancient academic custom, which still exists in some of the older Italian universities: he "disputed" his way from town to town. "In all the foreign universities and convents," he tells us, "there are, upon certain days, philosophical theses maintained against every adventitious disputant; for which, if the champion opposes with any dexterity, he can claim a gratuity in money, a dinner, and a bed for one night."

15. **Life in London.**—Returning to England in 1756, without a penny, in threadbare clothes, and uncouth in appearance, he found it difficult to get any kind of work. He was for a short time assistant to a chemist; he was even a physician; he was a reader for the press, during which time he read the proofs of Richardson's novels; and he was an usher in a school. At length, in 1757, he settled down for a while as editor of *The Monthly Review*, a publication of a bookseller called Griffiths. He next tried to enter the navy as a ship's surgeon; but he failed in his examination.

From the year 1758 Goldsmith was a man of letters by profession, and lived by his pen. In 1759 he brought out his *Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe*. He started a periodical, which he called *The Bee*, which ran but for a short time, and in 1760 appeared his delightful series of letters, *The Citizen of the World*, in the pages of *The Public Ledger*; these letters are written in the character of a Chinese philosopher to his friend at home, describing life as he found it in England. In 1764 he wrote *The Traveller*—a didactic poem

in heroic couplets, in which the poet describes his wanderings, and philosophises on the social condition of the countries through which he passed. It is "without one bad line," said a critic; "without one of Dryden's careless verses." *The Traveller* appeared at a very convenient time for the fame of Goldsmith. Young was dying; Gray was slow and indolent; Dr. Johnson had given up verse; while Akenside and others had failed to reach the popular heart. In 1766 appeared his *Vicar of Wakefield* (which had been sold to a publisher by Dr. Johnson for £60 two years before)—a novel which has become one of the classics of the world. Of this, Johnson gives us the following account:—

"I received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress, and, as it was not in his power to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as possible. I sent him a guinea, and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was dressed, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea, and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me that he had a novel ready for the press, which he produced to me. I looked into it, and saw its merit; told the landlady I should soon return; and, having gone to a bookseller, sold it for £60. I brought Goldsmith the money, and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill."

(i) The publisher to whom *The Vicar of Wakefield* was sold was Francis Newbery, who bought it in 1764, but did not publish it till 1766. In fact, he waited till *The Traveller* had appeared; and by that time Goldsmith's position as a writer was assured.

(ii) Goldsmith kept *The Vicar of Wakefield* for some years in his desk, took it out, altered here, corrected there, polished and repolished it; and this fact gives us the secret of the "graceful ease" that is conspicuous in every line. "Easy writing is very hard reading"; and it is only the arduous and unceasing labour of the writer that makes a book pleasant and delightful for the reader.

In 1768 he produced in Covent Garden Theatre his comedy, *The Good-Natur'd Man*, which did not achieve much success. *The Deserted Village* appeared in 1770, and quickly ran through several editions. A bright and most attractive comedy—*She Stoops to Conquer*—was brought out in 1773 at Covent Garden Theatre; and the applause of the public of London was unbounded. This play marks the zenith of his prosperity. Booksellers and publishers now courted

him, and bid against each other for his works; money poured into his pockets; but he was still poor; he could make, but he could not keep money. He squandered his earnings on rich clothes; he gambled; he lent money to his "friends"; and he wasted large sums on beggars and struggling acquaintances. In March, 1774, he was attacked by a nervous fever. Instead of calling in a good doctor, he prescribed for himself. When at length a physician was sent for, he found Goldsmith in strong convulsions; and his death took place on April 4th. He was interred in the Temple burying-ground, close by Temple Court, but the exact spot is not precisely known. A monument was erected to his memory in Westminster Abbey by the members of the "Club," the inscription on which was composed by Johnson; it contains the well-known words, "*qui nullum fere scribendi genus non tetigit, nullum quod tetigit non ornavit*" (who left scarcely any kind of writing untouched, and touched nothing that he did not adorn). "When Burke was told of his death, he burst into tears. Reynolds was in his painting-room when the messenger went to him; but at once he laid his pencil aside, which in times of great family distress he had not been known to do—left his painting-room, and did not re-enter it that day." The staircase of Goldsmith's room in Brick Court (Middle Temple) was crowded with women weeping bitterly for their dead friend—"the most generous of all men"—women without a home, without a friend except the man who was lying dead upstairs—outcasts of the great and populous city, who had seldom looked in vain to Goldsmith for help.

16. **His Work.**—Goldsmith's wide experience, both at home and abroad, the knowledge he had acquired as a student, a teacher, a doctor, a prisoner, a traveller, all gave him an intimate insight into human nature. This experience and this insight are conspicuous in most of his works. These works may be divided into two classes: those which he produced for bread, and those which he wrote for love of them. The first kind includes histories of England, Greece, Rome, a life of Bolingbroke, a life of Beau Nash (the local genius of Bath), a *History of Animated Nature* in eight volumes (of birds, beasts, or fishes Goldsmith knew nothing at

first hand), essays and reviews for the periodicals. Of the second kind are his two poems (*The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*), his comedies (*The Good-Natur'd Man* and *She Stoops to Conquer*), his *Vicar of Wakefield*, and his minor poems—such as *Retaliation* and *The Haunch of Venison*. But in all his books, whether produced under the pressure of necessity or by the spontaneity of genius, there is an invincible and unique charm of style, which even the youngest reader can feel. The qualities of this style are clearness, simplicity, and ease. Nothing is written for effect; the sentences read as if they were spoken by a kindly and thoughtful man, and even a child can understand them. Dr. Johnson predicted that Goldsmith would make his *Animated Nature* as interesting as a Persian tale; and he did. This kind of book was written “to make shift to eat and drink and have good clothes”; but Goldsmith’s personal charm and amiable character slipped into the writing without any self-consciousness. He was no imitator of Dr. Johnson or of Dr. Johnson’s pompous phraseology; if his style was influenced by any one, it was by French prose-writers, and especially by Voltaire. His *Vicar of Wakefield* is immortal; and, as has been said, “it is a test of taste in fiction to like the delightful Primrose family.” He knew little more of the history of Rome or Greece than he did of animated nature; but he had the unique art of presenting old knowledge in a new, interesting, and attractive form.

(i) “Had he lived but a few years more, his public fame would have been as great as his private reputation, and he might have enjoyed alive a part of that esteem which his country has ever since paid to the vivid and versatile genius who has touched on almost every subject of literature, and touched nothing that he did not adorn.”—THACKERAY.

(ii) “We read *The Vicar of Wakefield* in youth and age—we return to it again and again, and bless the memory of an author who contrives so well to reconcile us to human nature.”—WALTER SCOTT.

(iii) “One should have his own pen to describe him as he ought to be described—amiable, various, and bland, with careless inimitable grace touching on every kind of excellence—with manners unstudied, but a gentle heart—performing miracles of skill from pure happiness of nature, and whose greatest fault was ignorance of his own worth. As a poet, he is the most flowing and elegant of our versifiers since Pope, with traits of artless nature which Pope had not, and with peculiar felicity in the turns upon words, which he constantly repeated with delightful effect.”—HAZLITT.



17. **Minor Novelists.**—**Sarah Fielding** (1710—1768), sister of Henry Fielding, was rather an imitator of the style of Richardson than of that of her distinguished brother. *The Adventures of David Simple* is a novel of character cramped in the form of the picaresque novel of incident, a form more successfully adopted by Smollett. **Dr. John Moore** (1729—1802), the friend of Smollett, obtained a certain amount of success with his *Zeluco* (1786), a melodramatic novel exhibiting startling contrasts of villainy and virtue. The comic Scotsman, like the stage Irishman, a stock character in modern times, makes an early appearance in this novel. The hint given by Addison in *The Spectator*, wherein a gentleman writes the supposed transmigrations of a monkey, gave rise to a numerous progeny of novels, of which the most typical is that of **Charles Johnstone** (d. 1800), entitled *Chrysal; or, The Adventures of a Guinea*. Another writer who achieved considerable success with his contemporaries, and has not been without modern admirers, amongst whom may be reckoned Charles Kingsley, was **Henry Brooke** (1703—1783), whose novel, *The Fool of Quality*, was published 1766—1770. This work has many of the faults of the modern "novel with a purpose," and may be regarded rather as a loosely strung series of philosophical essays than a genuine work of fiction. The most noticeable but unsuccessful imitator of Sterne is the Scottish writer, **Henry Mackenzie** (1745—1831), author of *The Man of Feeling*, a loosely constructed story of maudlin sensibility. At the hands of such writers as these the novel suffered a temporary eclipse towards the end of the eighteenth century, only to commence its modern vogue soon after the beginning of the nineteenth.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

---

### JOHNSON AND HIS AGE.

1. **Samuel Johnson** (1709—1784).—Perhaps no writer in the whole history of English literature exercised so great an influence on letters, or so completely dominated his age, as Samuel Johnson. It was not so much by the amount or quality of his writings that he attained such a position, as by his character and intellectual pre-eminence—by those high mental and moral qualities which combine to make a man really “great.” All his life long he suffered from melancholia and frequent ill-health, but he sought and found in religion consolation and peace of mind. He was a man of sincere Christian piety, of great moral purity, and never-ending benevolence. For force and vigour of understanding, and power of speech to give expression to his sentiments, he stood without a rival. Owing to his bodily temperament, literary work was to him a serious labour; but in the company of his friends, and in social circles like the “Club,” he poured forth the rich treasures of his mind, and profoundly affected the thought of his age. He maintained a high and independent standard of criticism in literature and in life, crushing falsehood, folly, and pretension by the heavy battery of his wit, scorn, and invective. No man was ever so fortunate in his biographer, and in the pages of Boswell’s *Life* of him we have his table-talk chronicled, and it is literature of the best.

Samuel Johnson was born in 1709, exactly one hundred and one years after the birth of Milton, at Lichfield, in Staffordshire, the son of Michael Johnson, a bookseller of that town, and a man of knowledge, great common sense, and a dignified courtesy. “In

the child," says Macaulay, "the physical, intellectual, and moral peculiarities which afterwards distinguished the man were plainly discernible : great muscular strength, accompanied by much awkwardness and many infirmities ; great quickness of parts, with a morbid propensity to sloth and procrastination ; a kind and generous heart, with a gloomy and irritable temper." Johnson was scrofulous, and his parents believed that the Royal touch would cure the "king's evil." Accordingly he was taken up to London in his third year, and "touched" by the hand of the "good Queen Anne." He was sent to the local schools of Lichfield, but from sixteen to eighteen he lived at home ; and it was here that the foundation of his learning and culture was laid. He had the run of all the books in his father's shop—a large and miscellaneous library—and he read chiefly Latin works, and acquired in this way an extensive knowledge of Latin literature. He entered Pembroke College, Oxford, where he resided about three years, during which time he suffered pangs which were intolerable to his haughty spirit. He was poor ; his clothes were sometimes in rags, his boots in holes, and when he went to visit friends in Christ Church, he had to encounter looks of pity, of scorn, or of mirth. Some kind person placed a new pair of shoes at his room door ; he threw them out of the window in a fury. He left Oxford without taking his degree in 1731.

2. **Early Difficulties.**—Johnson next became usher of a grammar school in Leicestershire, then companion to a county gentleman, and finally a bookseller's hack in Birmingham. It was his destiny to fall in love with a widow, a Mrs. Porter, a lady twenty years older than himself. She was a short and personally unattractive woman, who dressed in gaudy, inharmonious colours, and painted her cheeks ; but Johnson's short sight prevented him from remarking these deficiencies. Besides, he was deeply and disinterestedly in love, for she was as poor as himself ; but she made him a good wife. He opened a private school, which did not succeed. He now determined to seek his fortune in London as a literary man, and started for the capital in 1737 with one of his pupils, David Garrick. Here he underwent all the straits, practised all the shifts, and felt all the bitterness of poverty and starvation. His most important engagement in London was the reporting of speeches

in the House of Commons for *The Gentleman's Magazine*. It was illegal in Johnson's time to report the proceedings or the speeches in the House of Commons, but he disguised places and persons under fictitious names. The debates were the "Debates of the Senate of Lilliput"; Blefuscu<sup>1</sup> was France; Mildendo was London; Nardac was the Duke of Newcastle; and Wingul Pulnub was William Pulteney. Johnson in time gained fame for himself as a writer by the publication of his *London* (1738)—a poem in imitation of Juvenal. He received only ten guineas for this poem; but two editions sold within the first week, and it brought him the notice and favour of Pope, then at the height of his fame.

3. **Johnson's Dictionary.**—In 1747 Johnson's reputation stood so high that the booksellers made proposals to him to write a *Dictionary* of the English language in two volumes folio. The fee was fifteen hundred guineas, but out of this sum he had to pay his assistants, so that there was little left to compensate Johnson for the years spent on its compilation. The work appeared in 1755.

Johnson came to London in the time which separated the period of patronage and the period when literature became a profession. "It had ceased to flourish under the patronage of the great, and had not begun to flourish under the patronage of the public." Johnson had approached Lord Chesterfield for his patronage of the *Dictionary*, and received a sum of ten pounds; but during the seven years of its compilation he took no further notice of the author or his work. At the moment of its publication he wrote two articles to *The World* praising the plan of the *Dictionary*; this drew from Johnson his famous letter, which for combined irony, manly indignation, and perfect good temper, has hardly an equal in English. From it is taken the following passage:—

Seven years, my lord, have now passed since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door, during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or a smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before. . . . Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice

<sup>1</sup> The name is borrowed from *Gulliver's Travels*.



which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind ; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it ; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it ; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations when no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

When the *Dictionary* appeared it was received with an enthusiasm such as no similar work had ever excited. The science of philology was little understood in Johnson's day, and the book is unimportant from an etymological point of view ; but, as Macaulay says : "The definitions in the *Dictionary* show so much acuteness of thought and command of language, and the passages quoted from poets, divines, and philosophers are so skilfully selected, that a leisure hour may always be very agreeably spent in turning over its pages."

4. **Other Works.**—His next poem was the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, which appeared in 1749, a splendid satire, adapted from the tenth satire of Juvenal, in which he draws in a few vigorous strokes numerous pictures of the rise and fall of celebrated men and the mockery of so-called greatness. Wolsey's fall he thus describes :—

In full-blown dignity, see Wolsey stand,  
Law in his voice, and fortune in his hand :  
To him the Church, the realm, their powers consign ;  
Through him the rays of regal bounty shine ;  
Turned by his nod the stream of honour flows,  
His smile alone security bestows. . . .  
At length his Sovereign frowns—the train of state  
Mark the keen glance, and watch the sign to hate ;  
Where'er he turns he meets a stranger's eye,  
His suppliants scorn him, and his followers fly ;  
Now drops at once the pride of awful state,  
The golden canopy, the glittering plate,  
The regal palace, the luxurious board,  
The liveried army, and the menial lord.  
With age, with cares, with maladies oppressed,  
He seeks the refuge of monastic rest.  
Grief aids disease, remembered folly stings,  
And his last sighs reproach the faith of kings.

In the same year his friend Garrick brought out, on the stage of Drury Lane Theatre, his tragedy of *Irene*. The play ran

only nine nights, and was then finally withdrawn. "The public listened with little emotion, but with much civility, to five acts of monotonous declamation." Owing to Garrick's good management, it brought Johnson nearly £200, and he received £100 for the copyright of the play. His next venture was a paper in imitation of *The Spectator*. It was called *The Rambler*, and lasted from March, 1750, to March, 1752. Richardson, the novelist, pronounced it the equal, if not the superior, of Addison's journal; but it is written in a heavy, pedantic style, and in a lofty, moralising strain, and lacks the lightness, grace, and charm of the older journal. In 1758 Johnson brought out another journal, called *The Idler*; this paper also lasted only two years. In the year 1759 his mother, who had reached the great age of ninety, died at Lichfield. He was still very poor; he had no money to give her a respectable funeral; and he overcame his natural indolence to write a book which should defray the funeral expenses. He accomplished the task in a week; the sheets were sent off to the press without revision; a hundred pounds were paid for the copyright; and the publishers lost nothing. The little book whose title is *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*, was well received, and has become a classic. It has little to do with the East, but is more of an essay or series of moral disquisitions on the happiness of man, the future state, and kindred subjects. In 1762 a pension of £300 a year was found for Dr. Johnson, through the influence of the then Prime Minister, Lord Bute, who was, like Johnson himself, a strong Tory. He was now above hack-work; he was at leisure to think and to talk; "he was at liberty," as Macaulay says, "to lie in bed till two in the afternoon, and to sit up talking till four in the morning." In the year 1765 his edition of *Shakespeare* was published. What with his indolence and his habits of procrastination, it had taken him nine years to edit; it adds little to Johnson's reputation.

5. **The Literary Club.**—The great moralist was now "undisputed dictator in the world of letters," holding the same position in the eighteenth century as Ben Jonson did in the seventeenth. A Club was formed of the ablest men in London; and over the meetings of this Club Johnson generally presided. Among the

members were Oliver Goldsmith, the most genuine literary man of his time; Edmund Burke, the greatest of political thinkers; Sir Joshua Reynolds, the eminent artist; Gibbon, perhaps the greatest historian that England has produced; Sir William Jones, the greatest linguist of his age; Garrick, the most popular actor in London; and other men noted for personal gifts—all admiring and paying loyal homage to Dr. Johnson. It was chiefly in this Club that the best part of his literary talk was uttered; and this talk was faithfully chronicled by his friend and admirer, James Boswell, of Auchinleck in Scotland. Johnson spoke even better than he wrote. "His colloquial talents," says Macaulay, "were of the highest order. He had strong sense, quick discernment, wit, humour, immense knowledge of literature and life, and an infinite store of curious anecdotes. Every sentence that dropped from his lips was as correct in structure as the most nicely balanced period of *The Rambler*. All was simplicity, ease, and vigour." In 1765 Johnson became acquainted with the Thrales, the husband a wealthy brewer, and his wife a very bright, attractive, kindly, and conversational woman. He became a frequent visitor to Streatham, where the Thrales lived; and for about sixteen years fully half of his time was spent there. In his own house in Bolt Court, Fleet Street, Johnson's immense kindness had assembled a most motley crew. There was a Mrs. Williams, poor, old, and blind, who was at the head of his establishment; a Mrs. Desmoulins, as poor as Mrs. Williams; a Miss Carmichael (whom Dr. Johnson addressed as Polly); an old doctor called Levett, "who bled and dosed coal-heavers and hackney coachmen"; and there was a negro-servant called Frank. All these persons lived, in great part, on the bounty of the good man, quarrelling eternally among themselves, and leaving off only to quarrel with and abuse their benefactor.

**6. Visit to Scotland.**—In the year 1773 Johnson was induced by Boswell to pay a visit to Scotland, to penetrate into the wilderness of the Highlands, and even to travel in the almost unknown islands of the Hebrides. The outcome of this excursion was the *Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland*, which appeared in the year 1775. It is a very interesting and readable work, but lacks that more attractive personal touch which Boswell gives in his picturesque

account of the same tour. In the same year he received the richly deserved doctor's degree from the University of Oxford. Two years after the leading booksellers in London asked him to write introductions to a complete edition of the English Poets, which they were about to issue. He undertook the task with eagerness; his mind was filled to overflowing with literary matter, ideas, and criticisms; and the work, which was at first intended to be a few prefaces and paragraphs for each poet, swelled into four volumes. It is Johnson's highest achievement, and is all the more remarkable in that it was produced between the ages of sixty-eight and seventy-two. Of it, Macaulay well says: "*The Lives of the Poets* are, on the whole, the best of Johnson's works. The narratives are as entertaining as any novel. The remarks on life and on human nature are eminently shrewd and profound. The criticisms are often excellent."

"Johnson's estimate of Chaucer doubtless would have been, as his *Rambler* remarks on Spenser actually are, worthless, except as a curiosity. But of Dryden, of Pope, and of the numerous minor poets of their time and his, he could speak with a competently adjusted theory, with admirable literary knowledge and shrewdness, and with a huge store of literary tradition which his long and conversation-loving life had accumulated, and which would have been lost to us had he not written."—SAINTSBURY.

In the month of June, 1783, Johnson had a paralytic stroke, which was followed by other maladies—asthma, which tortured him day and night, and dropsy. He thought of Rome and Naples; but he at length made up his mind to risk another English winter. That winter was his last. He died on December 13th, 1784, and was buried in Westminster Abbey—followed to his grave by the best and most distinguished men in London. He lies "among the eminent men of whom he had been the historian—Cowley and Denham, Dryden and Congreve, Gray, Prior, and Addison."

7. **His Style.**—The inflated style, in English which abounds "in long-tailed words in *osity* and *ation*," sometimes goes by the name of "Johnsonese." But Johnson's style, like every other, varies a good deal with the nature of the subject he is writing on. At times he could discard long words, and employ pithy Saxon English. At his best, he writes as he talked; and no man



ever talked with greater force or effect. He told Sir Joshua Reynolds that he "had early laid it down as a rule to do his best on every occasion and in every company; to impart whatever he knew in the most forceful language he could put it in; and that, by constant practice, and never suffering any careless expression to escape him, or attempting to deliver his thoughts without arranging them in the clearest manner, it became habitual to him." *Rasselas* is the best example of his more formal style. In the *Lives of the Poets* he shows an easy vigour, a rich variety, an elastic rhythm, and a brilliance of wit and imagination hardly excelled by any other author. But Johnson was too fond of balanced clauses, of antitheses, which sometimes became mechanical, and of pompous and ponderous statement. He makes a young lady of sixteen write thus (in *The Rambler*) about her aunt: "She had not very elevated sentiments or extensive views, but her principles were good and her intentions pure; and though some may practise more virtues, scarce any commit fewer faults." He had also a preference for learned and Latinised words. "As soon," says Macaulay, "as he took his pen in his hand to write for the public, his style became systematically vicious. All his books are written in a learned language, in a language which nobody hears from his mother or his nurse; in a language in which nobody ever quarrels, or drives bargains, or makes love; in a language in which nobody ever thinks." His admirers and followers imitated his mannerisms, and outdid these in their imitations; and hence they came to employ a pompous, inflated language, sprinkled all over with words of classical origin; and this kind of "Johnsonese" was the mode in England for nearly two generations.

(i) "Johnson himself wrote a prose decidedly modern. The reproach contained in the phrase 'Johnsonian English' must not mislead us. It is aimed at his words, not at his structure. In Johnson's prose the words are often pompous and long, but the structure is always plain and modern. . . . It is by its organism—an organism opposed to length and involvement, and enabling us to be clear, plain, and short—that English style after the Restoration breaks with the style of the times preceding it, finds the true law of prose, and becomes modern; becomes, in spite of superficial differences, the style of our own day."—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

(ii) "The more we study Johnson the higher will be our esteem for the power of his mind, the width of his interests, the largeness of his knowledge,

the freshness, fearlessness, and strength of his judgments. The higher, too, will be our esteem for his character. . . . We have in him a fine and admirable type, worthy to be kept in view for ever, of 'the ancient and inbred integrity, piety, good nature, and good humour of the English people.'"—*Idem*.

The following, taken from *The Rambler*, is an example of his style :—

#### GOOD HUMOUR.

Good humour may be defined a habit of being pleased ; a constant and perennial softness of manner, easiness of approach, and suavity of disposition ; like that which every man perceives in himself, when the first transports of new felicity have subsided, and his thoughts are only kept in motion by a slow succession of soft impulses. Good humour is a state between gaiety and unconcern ; the act or emanation of a mind at leisure to regard the gratification of another.

It is imagined by many, that whenever they aspire to please, they are required to be merry, and to show the gladness of their souls by flights of pleasantry, and bursts of laughter. But, though these men may be for a time heard with applause and admiration, they seldom delight us long. We enjoy them a little, and then retire to easiness and good humour, as the eye gazes awhile on eminences glittering with the sun, but soon turns aching away to verdure and to flowers.

Gaiety is to good humour as animal perfumes to vegetable fragrance ; the one overpowers weak spirits, and the other recreates and revives them. Gaiety seldom fails to give some pain ; the hearers either strain their faculties to accompany its towerings, or are left behind in envy and despair. Good humour boasts no faculties which every one does not believe in his own power, and pleases principally by not offending.

8. **James Boswell** (1740—1795), Laird of Auchinleck (to give him his Scottish title), was the author of what is rightly considered the greatest of our biographies. His *Life of Samuel Johnson*, which appeared in 1791, gives a most vivid description of the great "Dictator of Letters"—with all his virtues, abilities, noble qualities, shortcomings, foibles, gaucheries, and absurdities. Boswell was not in the ordinary acceptance of the term a literary man ; but he has given to the reading world a portrait which is unique in literature, and which will be surveyed with admiration and pleasure as long as the English language exists. "That Boswell was a coxcomb and bore," says Macaulay, "weak, vain, gushing, curious, garrulous, was obvious to all who were acquainted with him. . . . During twenty years the disciple continued to worship the master : the master continued to scold the disciple, to sneer at him, and to love him . . . . During

his occasional visits to London, his chief business was to watch Johnson; to discover all Johnson's habits, to turn the conversation to subjects about which Johnson was likely to say something remarkable, and to fill quarto notebooks with minutes of what Johnson had said. In this way were gathered the materials out of which was afterwards constructed the most interesting biographical work in the world." Macaulay carries his low estimate of Boswell too far. The great biography is not the product of a man who "could not reason" and "had no wit." That he was "weak, vain, curious, and garrulous" his works abundantly attest; but the qualities which counterbalanced these must have been great to have retained for so many years the friendship of Johnson. Boswell was remarkable for his good humour, his brightness, vivacity, and simplicity. His keenness of observation, his powers of expression, his sense of proportion, and his unrivalled qualities in matters of detail belong to him pre-eminently as a literary artist.

The following is a character-sketch of Dr. Johnson from Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* :—

He united a most logical head with a most fertile imagination, which gave him an extraordinary advantage in arguing; for he could reason close and wide, as he saw best for the moment. He could, when he chose it, be the greatest sophist that ever wielded a weapon in the schools of declamation; but he indulged this only in conversation; for he owned he sometimes talked for victory; he was too conscientious to make error permanent and pernicious, by deliberately writing it. He was conscious of his superiority. He loved praise when it was brought to him; but was too proud to seek for it. He was somewhat susceptible of flattery. His mind was so full of imagery that he might have been perpetually a poet. It has often been remarked, that in his poetical pieces, which it is to be regretted are so few, because so excellent, his style is easier than in his prose. There is deception in this: it is not easier, but better suited to the dignity of verse; as one may dance with grace, whose motions in ordinary walking—in the common step—are awkward. He had a constitutional melancholy, the clouds of which darkened the brightness of his fancy, and gave a gloomy cast to his whole course of thinking; yet, though grave and awful in his deportment, when he thought it necessary or proper, he frequently indulged himself in pleasantry and sportive sallies. He was prone to superstition, but not to credulity. Though his imagination might incline him to a belief of the marvellous and the mysterious, his vigorous reason examined the evidence with jealousy. He had a loud voice, and a slow, deliberate utterance, which no doubt gave some additional weight to the sterling metal of his conversation. His person was large, robust, I may say approaching to the gigantic, and grown unwieldy from corpulency.

Boswell paid a visit to Corsica in 1765, made the acquaintance of General Paoli, the Liberator of the island, and wrote *An Account of Corsica*, which he published in 1768. Hence he was generally spoken of in London as "Corsican Bozzy." Boswell's friendship with Johnson was the brightest element in his career. There were other features of his character, besides those already mentioned, which were not attractive: he was intemperate; he was recklessly extravagant and always in debt; and was unsuccessful, for want of steady application, in his practice at the Bar. He died in London in 1795, after a short illness, a victim to hypochondria, gloom, and intemperance.

"Whatever may be our opinion of Boswell, either as to character or as to intellect, the praise must be universally conceded to him of having produced the very best book, in its own kind, which the world has seen. . . . Boswell's observations were absolutely different from the mechanical exactness of literary photography; they were guided by an instinctive discrimination and made real and vivid by the skill of an artist."—CRAIK.

9. **David Hume** (1711—1776), the celebrated historian and the greatest philosophical thinker of his day, was the son of a Scots laird of the Border clan of Home or Hume, the proprietor of Ninewells, in Berwickshire. He was born at Edinburgh, and educated at the university of that city; he tried the law, and disliked it; he tried commerce, and liked that still less; and at the age of twenty-three he resolved to give up his life to philosophy and literature. Having very little money, he went to live in a small French village—La Flèche, in Anjou—and while there wrote his *Treatise on Human Nature*. It was published in 1739, and fell still-born from the press. He next acted for some time as secretary to General Sinclair in his expedition to Canada, and afterwards in the same capacity to him as military envoy at Vienna and Turin. His *Essays Moral and Political* was published in 1741-2, and in the year 1752 he was appointed librarian to the Faculty of Advocates in Edinburgh, where he had a fine library at his command. This led him into the field of history, and for the next eleven years he devoted himself to writing the *History of England*. The first volume, dealing with the reigns of James I. and Charles I., appeared in 1754; it was badly received, and only forty-five copies were sold in twelve months. Of



its reception he writes: "I was assailed by one cry of reproach, disapprobation, and even detestation. . . . I scarcely, indeed, heard of one man in the three kingdoms, considerable for rank or letters, that could endure the book." But Hume persevered; volume after volume was written and published up to 1762; and Hume now stood at the head of all English historians.<sup>1</sup> In 1763 he was appointed secretary to the English Embassy in Paris, under the Earl of Hertford; and the learned and literary society of France received him with open arms. In 1766 he returned to England, to be made Under-Secretary of State, and after two years he retired to Edinburgh, in the possession of £1,000 a year, and died there in 1776.

As an historian, he was deficient in that accurate knowledge which research in original sources alone can give. He paid little or no attention to chronicles or records, nor troubled to sift their evidence for the light they throw on historic events. His Tory bias is strongly evidenced, in dealing with the Stuart period especially, and he shows little sympathy with the struggle for, and the growth of, popular liberty, which is so strong a feature in the history of the English race. But these qualities of the historical spirit are the growth of a later—in fact, of our own—time. Hume's merits are, however, great. He possessed a rare power in the analysis of character, and his philosophic clearness of vision, his general sobriety of judgment, his critical faculty, and his dignity of expression, raise his work to a high standard of excellence.

As a philosopher, he was the most original thinker since Berkeley, and as such he ranks higher than as an historian. His utilitarian and sceptical views were the cause of much criticism in his own day, and have been since. His influence was far-reaching in effect, for it stimulated the investigations of Kant, and may thus be said to have given the impetus to the new turn of speculative philosophy, in the domain of modern thought.

Hume aimed in his writings at being "concise after the manner of the ancients." Hence simplicity is the mark of his style; and this simplicity is always studied—sometimes even strained, but never cold

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon did not produce his first volume of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* until 1776.

nor hard. His knowledge of French and French literature had great influence on the lucidity of his prose. The motion of it is steady and even, undisturbed by passion and unmoved by enthusiasm. His knowledge of human nature, on both sides of the Channel, gave him the power of discriminating character and of forming shrewd judgments. The following is an example of his style :—

To conclude historically with my own character. I am, or rather was (for that is the style I must now use in speaking of myself, which emboldens me the more to speak my sentiments) ; I was, I say, a man of mild dispositions, of command of temper, of an open, social, and cheerful humour, capable of attachment, but little susceptible to enmity, and of great moderation in all my passions. Even my love of literary fame, my ruling passion, never soured my temper, notwithstanding my frequent disappointments. My company was not unacceptable to the young and careless, as well as to the studious and literary ; and as I took a particular pleasure in the company of modest women, I had no reason to be displeased with the reception I met with from them.  
—From *My Own Life*.

10. **William Robertson** (1721—1793) was a Scotch clergyman who, at the age of thirty-seven, was appointed to an Edinburgh parish, and became a member of the intellectual circle of that city, among whom were David Hume and Adam Smith. A year later (1759) he published his *History of Scotland*, which dealt with the reigns of Mary and James VI. It achieved an immediate success, and in 1762 he was made Principal of Edinburgh University and Historiographer-Royal for Scotland. His greatest work, the *History of Charles V.*, appeared in 1769, for which he received the magnificent sum of £4,500. Eight years later he published his *History of America*, but as England was then at war with her colonies, the work remained unfinished.

As an historian, Robertson took immense pains in his work. Though he has been superseded, yet his defects are chiefly due to the lack of those manuscripts and other materials which have been made available since his day. Compared with Hume, he writes with more warmth and enthusiasm, with more picturesque detail—treatment to which the periods he deals with, containing, as they do, all the elements of romance, could not fail to lend themselves. His style, is, however, often laboured and heavy, and at times pompous and artificial, but it has in it, on the whole, sustained dignity and strength. The following is an example :—

## CHARACTER OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS.

To all the charms of beauty, and the utmost elegance of external form, she added those accomplishments which render these impressions irresistible. Polite, affable, insinuating, sprightly, and capable of speaking and of writing with equal ease and dignity. Sudden, however, and violent in all her attachments; because her heart was warm and unsuspecting. Impatient of contradiction; because she had been accustomed from her infancy to be treated as a queen. No stranger, on some occasions, to dissimulation, which, in that perfidious court where she received her education, was reckoned among the necessary arts of government. Not insensible of flattery, or unconscious of that pleasure with which almost every woman beholds the influence of her own beauty. Formed with the qualities which we love, not with the talents that we admire, she was an agreeable woman rather than an illustrious queen. The vivacity of her spirit, not sufficiently tempered with sound judgment, and the warmth of her heart, which was not at all times under the restraint of discretion, betrayed her both into errors and into crime.

II. **Edward Gibbon** (1737—1794), the greatest historian of the eighteenth century, and one of the greatest that has ever lived, belonged to an old Kentish family, and was sent to Oxford at the age of fifteen. This was at a time when the University was anything but a stimulating centre of knowledge, and of its stagnation at this period Gibbon himself gives us a graphic description. Here he stayed for fourteen months, "the most idle," he says, "and unprofitable of my whole life;" but having come under the influence of Bossuet's writings, he became a convert to Roman Catholicism, and so ceased to be a member of the University. His father at once sent him to Lausanne, committing him to the care of M. Pavillard, a Calvinist clergyman, who in time reconverted him to the Protestant faith. In the latter part of his life, however, his views conformed more to the philosophical deism which characterised the thought of the eighteenth century in England. Gibbon remained at Lausanne for five years, during which time he read steadily and widely in Latin classics and in French literature. His long absence abroad and the nature of his studies deprived Gibbon of what Matthew Arnold calls the "note of provincality," and gave that un-English tone to his temper, judgment, and style which distinguishes him from all other writers of this country.

Gibbon returned home in 1759, and served for several years as captain in the Hampshire Militia, an experience which he tells us was of much service to him afterwards in dealing with campaigns and

battles in his great historical work. In 1763 we find him again on the Continent travelling through France, Switzerland, and Italy. It was while at Rome a year later that the long-cherished idea of writing an historical work assumed a definite shape. He tells us: "It was at Rome on October 15th, 1764, as I sat musing amid the ruins of the Capitol, while the bare-footed friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind." He returned to England again, and engaged in several literary productions during a period of five years, until the death of his father in 1770. He then went to London in order to carry on his literary pursuits, and became a member of the Literary Club which gathered round Johnson. His study and labour were interrupted by the offer of a seat in the House of Commons, which he was induced to accept; and he was elected member for Liskeard in the general election of 1774. He sat as a silent member, gave his support to the Government, and was appointed Commissioner of Trade, a post he held for about three years.

12. **The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.**—The first volume of his great history was issued in the beginning of 1776. Its publication was an immense success, and the book was everywhere received with the most ardent applause. Not only the general public, but the most learned scholars and severest critics, showered upon it eulogies of the warmest character. It was indeed a work that required for its production colossal ability and indomitable perseverance, embracing, as it did, the story of the civilised portions of the then known world. "The destruction of Rome," as Mr. Cotter Morrison well says, "was not only a destruction of an empire, it was the destruction of a phase of human thought, of a system of human beliefs, of morals, politics, civilisation. . . . The fall of Rome was the death of the old Pagan world and the birth of the new Christian world—the greatest transition in history." This immense subject Gibbon handled in a manner and with a power that to-day excite the admiration of every scholar. In spite of the extraordinary extent and variety of his matter, the infinite complexity of the events and characters he had to discuss and describe, he never fails in accuracy, he carries the load of his vast learning "lightly, like a flower."



"That Gibbon should ever be displaced seems impossible. That wonderful man monopolised, so to speak, the historical genius and the historical learning of a whole generation, and left little, indeed, of either for his contemporaries. He remains the one historian of the eighteenth century whom modern research has neither set aside nor threatened to set aside. We may correct and improve from the stores which have been opened since Gibbon's time . . . but the work of Gibbon as a whole, as the encyclopaedic history of thirteen hundred years, as the grandest of historical designs, carried out alike with wonderful power and wonderful accuracy, must ever keep its place. Whatever else is read, Gibbon must be read too."—FREEMAN.

The second and third volumes appeared in 1781, and Gibbon now decided on a great change in his life. He joined his old friend Deyverdun at Lausanne in a charming house overlooking the lake, and there proceeded leisurely and with perfect peace of mind with the remaining volumes of his great work. He had immense capacity for taking pains; he tells us "three times did I compose the first chapter, and twice the second and third, before I was tolerably satisfied with their effect." He had nearly finished his fourth volume before he left England. When he had settled down at Lausanne the work grew under his hands with great rapidity, and he drew it to a close on the night of June 27th, 1787. He describes the incident as follows :—

Between the hours of eleven and twelve I wrote the last lines of the last page in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen, I took several turns in a *berceau* or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatsoever might be the future fate of my history, the life of the historian must be short and precarious.

After an admirable survey of Roman history from the reign of Augustus, he commences with the accession of Commodus (180 A.D.), and ranges with an unrivalled clearness of vision and masterly power of description over the Roman world—the ruin of the western empire by the barbarians of Central Europe, the growth of the early Christian Church, the spread of Byzantine power—and continues with sustained interest, and an energy that never flags, down to the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

Gibbon's unfavourable and prejudiced account of the early Christian Church in the two final chapters of the first volume has been the occasion of much comment. The reason for his attitude is not far to seek. We have already spoken of his changes of views at an early age, and in later years he was more or less indifferent to Christianity. He had little or no sympathy with the spiritual and emotional side of human nature, and was incapable of appreciating the full significance of the Christian faith as a force in human conduct, or of tracing satisfactorily its leavening influence among the elements that wrought such a change in the last stages of pagan Rome. In the rest of the history there is little to find fault with from this point of view; and from his philosophical standpoint he well maintains a balance of judgment, and a freedom from bias in dealing with ecclesiastical matters, which many succeeding historians might well have emulated.

13. **His Style.**—Gibbon's style has been blamed and has been praised by opposing schools of historians and critics. A man with so strong a grasp of his subject, with an intellect so flexible, with a sympathy so large for every side and section of humanity, could not but write in a vigorous style. But it is more than vigorous; there is in his diction a splendour and a majesty which compels the admiration of the reader. It fails in terseness; it is sometimes grandiloquent and pompous; but it is never loose or careless. For sustained energy, vigour, and stateliness, for masculine strength and rapidity of movement, when occasion demands it, and for real eloquence, Gibbon's style is a model of excellence. His whole life was concentrated on this one supreme and noble task; and his labours were crowned with a magnificent success.

The last few years of Gibbon's life were sad and unhappy, owing to the death of friends and ill-health. His life-long labours as a student and his sedentary habits brought on disease, and he died of dropsy in 1794. His friend, Lord Sheffield, published his posthumous works two years later, of which the *Memoirs* are the most important.

The following is an example of his style:—

## THE CONQUEST OF JERUSALEM.

Raymond's tower was reduced to ashes by the fire of the besieged, but his colleague was more vigilant and successful; the enemies were driven by his archers from the rampart; the drawbridge was let down; and on a Friday, at three in the afternoon, the day and hour of the Passion, Godfrey of Bouillon stood victorious on the walls of Jerusalem. His example was followed on every side by the emulation of valour; and, about four hundred and sixty years after the conquest of Omar, the holy city was rescued from the Mahometan yoke. In the pillage of public and private wealth, the adventurers had agreed to respect the exclusive property of the first occupant, and the spoils of the great Mosque—seventy lamps and massy vases of gold and silver—rewarded the diligence, and displayed the generosity of Tancred. . . . They indulged themselves three days in a promiscuous massacre, and the infection of the dead bodies produced an epidemical disease. After seventy thousand Moslems had been put to the sword, and the harmless Jews had been burnt in their synagogue, they could still reserve a multitude of captives whom interest or lassitude persuaded them to spare. . . . The holy sepulchre was now free; and the bloody victors prepared to accomplish their vow. Bareheaded and barefoot, with contrite hearts and in an humble posture, they ascended the hill of Calvary amidst the loud anthems of the clergy, kissed the stone which had covered the Saviour of the world, and bedewed with tears of joy and penitence the monument of their redemption.—From *Decline and Fall*, vol. vii.

14. **Edmund Burke** (1729—1797), one of the greatest orators and political thinkers that these countries have produced, was born in Dublin, the son of an attorney, in 1729. He received his education at a small school at Ballitore, co. Kildare, under Richard Shackleton, a native of Yorkshire, and member of the Society of Friends. He entered and became a Scholar of Trinity College, where he was a fellow-student with Goldsmith. Here he read deeply in the Latin classics and the English poets, and established the famous Historical Society where he laid the foundation of his future success as a speaker and writer. In 1750 Burke entered himself of the Middle Temple, where he kept his terms, but was never called to the Bar.

15. **Early Works.**—His first literary work was an essay entitled *A Vindication of Natural Society*, in which Burke so successfully parodied Bolingbroke's views and style that many of the best critics thought the book was written by him. In 1757 he published *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, a work on aesthetics, which, notwithstanding his want of knowledge of art, received much attention on account of the novelty of the subject. In 1759 he planned *The Annual*

*Register* with the publisher Dodsley, and for the greater part of his life continued to contribute to its pages. In the same year he began his political career as secretary to Hamilton, afterwards Chief Secretary for Ireland; and in 1766, being now secretary to the Marquis of Rockingham, he entered Parliament as member for Wendover, Buckinghamshire. He remained for nearly thirty years a member of the House of Commons; yet he was not a success, in one sense of the word; though the greatest man of his party, and notwithstanding his transcendent ability, he was never admitted to the Cabinet. The House in time came not to care much for his speeches when spoken; but every one read them with eager delight when they appeared in a printed form. He frequently astonished; but he could neither attract nor command a House of Commons audience. In fact, in his later years, he was nick-named "the dinner bell," and his rising in his place was the signal for the general emptying of the benches. But the influence of his oratory on the general public was very different. Fanny Burney, the novelist, whose feelings and sympathies were all on the side of Hastings, thus describes her emotions on hearing Burke's opening speech at the famous trial: "He interested me, he engaged, he at last overpowered me. I felt my cause was lost. I could hardly keep my seat. My eyes dreaded a single glance towards a man so accused as Mr. Hastings. I wanted to sink through the floor, that they might be saved so painful a sight."

His oratory, or rather his rhetoric, was of an astonishing, and even extravagant, splendour. No one "ever excelled him in the melody of his sentences, the magnificence of his invective, the trumpet blast of his sonorous declamation." His orations, whether immediately successful in the House or not, were always literature—and literature of the highest and noblest kind. As a debater, he was the inferior of Pitt, and not nearly so ready, or so quick in reply, as Fox.

16. **English Affairs.**—Burke was twice Paymaster of the Forces; his career was marked by a splendid independence, and his influence on the public life of his time was immense. He was member for Bristol for six years, but lost his seat for the liberality of his views



and his independent attitude as a statesman. Against the coercion of the American colonies, the corruption of Lord North's administration, and the English policy in India, Burke offered a strenuous opposition; and his speech at the impeachment of Warren Hastings ranks as one of the greatest of its kind that the oratory of any tongue can show. His *Thoughts on the Present Discontents* (1770), his *Speech on American Taxation* (1774), and his *Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol* (1777), and others, are models of political exposition, full of profound wisdom, great judgment, and deep philosophical reflection. Never before was such a wealth of illustration poured forth on political affairs, in language glowing with a fervour of imagination, and a passionate sympathy of heart and head, as by Burke, fired as he was with a desire to redress abuses, to relieve the oppressed, and to raise high the standard of English policy at home and abroad. It is a characteristic of all his political writings that he shows a strong dislike of abstract theories and metaphysical generalities; he was a Conservative and a practical man in the highest and truest sense of the word. He was a reformer, but not an innovator. "Nothing," he says, "is more beautiful in the theory of Parliaments than that principle of renovation and union of permanence and change that are happily mixed in their constitution."

17. **The French Revolution.**—The evils of the French Revolution profoundly affected the mind of Burke, and he became the severest critic of the movement and of the destructive agencies to which it gave rise. His *Reflections on the French Revolution* (1790) ran through eleven editions in a year, and acted as a great incentive to resistance among the monarchies abroad. This was followed by other works; and at the rapid process of destruction of all law and order in France, Burke burns to a white heat of passion and indignation, to which he gives vent in his *Thoughts on French Affairs* (1797) and *Letters on the Regicide Peace*. Burke retired from public life in 1794, and it is very probable he would have taken a seat in the House of Lords as Earl of Beaconsfield, a title which was afterwards assumed by an equally celebrated statesman, Benjamin Disraeli. But the death of his son, and only child, to whom he was tenderly attached, quite crushed him, and extinguished the

desire for any such honour. He accepted, however, a pension, and for this he was attacked by the Duke of Bedford. Burke replied in a *Letter to a Noble Lord*, in which he makes not only a masterly and dignified defence, but crushes the "leviathan among all the creatures of the Crown," as he rightly labels him, with a battery of irresistible logic, scorn, and ridicule. There is nothing finer in his writings than the parallel he draws between the reward conferred on him, for the services given to his country, and the grants given to the founder of the house of Russell—"a prompt and greedy instrument of a levelling tyrant," Henry VIII.

18. **His Style.**—The chief qualities of Burke's style are copiousness, fertility of allusions, an inordinate use of metaphor, power, movement, and freedom. There is, at times, a certain grave simplicity in his writing; and on these occasions Burke easily glides into the use of scriptural phrases. He read a great deal in the Authorised Version of the Bible, and his mind was steeped in its language and its rhythms. Goldsmith said of Burke: "He winds his way into a subject, like a serpent." Sometimes the brilliancy is excessive; sometimes the picturesqueness is overdone; but he certainly restored to English prose a wealth and freedom which it had not enjoyed since the seventeenth century. He was fond of saying the same thing in various ways: he employs largely the rhetorical device of amplification or iteration; he uses concrete terms in preference to abstract or general ideas: short, pointed, and forcible sentences are intermingled with long, swelling, sinuous periods: "And is their example nothing? It is everything. Example is the school of mankind, and they will learn at no other." And then follow several long, flowing sentences in a magnificent sweep. The *Reflections on the French Revolution* is full of eloquent passages like the following: "Sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the Queen of France, then the Dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in; glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendour, and joy." In his *Letter to a Noble Lord* he speaks of the death of his son, and sounds the lowest depths of manly

pathos: "I am alone. I have none to meet my enemies in the gate. Indeed, my lord, I greatly deceive myself, if in this hard season I would give a peck of refuse wheat for all that is called fame and honour in the world. 'This is the appetite of but a few. It is a luxury, it is a privilege, it is an indulgence for those who are at their ease. . . . I live in an inverted order. 'They who ought to have succeeded me are gone before."

(i) "In amplitude of comprehension," says Macaulay, "and richness of imagination he is superior to every orator ancient or modern." "Burke," says Matthew Arnold, "is so great because, almost alone in England, he brings thought to bear upon politics, he saturates politics with thought."

(ii) Burke is the supreme writer of his century, and the greatest master of metaphor that the world has ever seen."—DE QUINCEY.

(iii) "Burke fought nobly for noble causes: against the crimes of power in England, the crimes of the people in France, the crimes of monopolists in India."—TAINE.

19. **Adam Smith** (1723—1790), born at Kirkcaldy, in Fifeshire, occupies a high position among the philosophers and prose writers of the eighteenth century. He held the chair of Logic and of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow, and in 1759 published his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which, from its style and popular exposition of the philosophy of the day, had a great vogue. He devoted himself for the next ten years to the study of the then untrodden field of economics; and in 1776 he published his *Wealth of Nations*, in which he not only laid the foundation of his own fame, but also that of the science of political economy. In this remarkable work Smith shows wide reading and research, sound knowledge and reasoning; and for the first time he clears the air on such questions as labour and capital, the true meaning of wealth, the State regulation of industry, and other problems which confused the political thinker. Smith's views and deductions have been since modified, and the historical school has arisen in our own time in opposition to his abstract method of treatment and that of his followers; but the *Wealth of Nations* remains a great landmark in a new field of knowledge, and is read for its originality, its wealth of detail and illustration, for its shrewd and wise observations, and for its philosophic reflections on the economic policy of the civilised world.

20. **Philip Dormer Stanhope**, Earl of Chesterfield (1694—1773), filled a prominent place in the political, social, and literary circles of the eighteenth century. He was member of Parliament for ten years, until he succeeded his father as fourth earl in 1726; twenty years later he was a successful Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and soon after he became one of the Secretaries of State. He is now chiefly remembered in connection with the publication of Johnson's *Dictionary*, already referred to, and for his *Letters to His Son*. These were addressed to his natural son, and published in 1774, soon after the Earl's death. They have been the subject of much comment, and Johnson denounced them for their low tone of morals and manners. From the purely moral standpoint they cannot be defended; but on that of manners they admit of some justification, for one of Chesterfield's main objects was to inculcate etiquette, good-breeding, gentlemanly behaviour and address, so as to fit his son for his position in the world. The *Letters* were never intended for publication; as literature they are remarkable for their polished and refined style; the language is clear, graceful, and incisive. Chesterfield is a master of epigram, and the *Letters* contain much worldly wisdom, the result of a keen, observant, and penetrating intellect.

21. Among the theological writers of the latter half of the eighteenth century, **William Paley** (1743—1805) was the most important figure. He was distinguished at Cambridge, where he became a Fellow, took holy orders, advanced in the Church, and wrote a number of philosophical and theological works. Among these are his *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (1785), *Horae Paulinae* (1790), *View of the Evidences of Christianity* (1794), and in 1802 *Natural Theology*, which reached its twentieth edition in eighteen years. His works enjoyed a wide popularity, and retained their hold for generations; it was to the general public he appealed, and his style is clear, correct, and free from pedantry and affectation. But he lacks enthusiasm, emotion, and fervour; and the modern reader is not attracted by his "common-sense" views of religion, and his dry and self-possessed style.

22. **Thomas Warton** (1728—1790) is remarkable in the history of English literature as the first author who wrote a *History of*



*English Poetry.* He became a Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, and was afterwards appointed Professor of Poetry in the University (1757), an office in which he succeeded his father. He was also Poet Laureate from 1785 until his death. His *History*, in three volumes, appeared between the years 1774 and 1781, and established his reputation. He wrote an essay on Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and published an edition of Milton's minor poems; and in each of these works he gave a considerable stimulus to the critical and literary spirit of his age. His prose style is plain, clear, and forcible. He reached a higher level of literary appreciation, and carried a truer spirit of interpretation into poetic criticism than Johnson. His great enthusiasm; his wide and intimate knowledge with early English literature, made his *History* one of great value; and although it has defects, and though the field has been minutely travelled since, it is yet of importance to the student of English poetry. He was a close friend of Johnson's, and belonged to the literary circle of which he was the central figure.

23. **Gilbert White** (1720—1793)—an isolated figure in the Johnsonian age—was born and spent nearly his whole life in Selborne, a Hampshire village. He was educated by Warton's father, vicar of Basingstoke, and at Oxford University, where he became a Fellow of Oriel College. He took holy orders, became curate, and afterwards vicar, of his native parish, Selborne. White was an outdoor naturalist, and in Selborne and its neighbourhood he carried on his observations with unwearied diligence and great keenness for over thirty years, noting in his journal every phenomenon of nature, weather-lore, and miscellaneous memoranda of all kinds. In 1789 he published, not without much pressure on the part of his brother, his *Natural History of Selborne*, written in the form of letters, and this book has become one of the classics of the language. It is marked by grace, ease, and unaffected simplicity of style, a genuine sympathy with Nature and her ways, and by a delightful play of fancy and imagination. White not only opened up new vistas in the patient and scientific observations of Nature, but he founded a new branch of literature; and, notwithstanding the many rich fruits this branch has borne since his day, the *History of Selborne* has lost nothing of its

originality, but has kept its freshness, sweetness, and perennial charm.

24. **Richard Brinsley Sheridan** (1751—1816), the brilliant dramatist and orator, came of a County Cavan family remarkable for their mental gifts. Sheridan's grandfather was the friend of Swift, his father was an actor and dramatist, and his mother earned a contemporary reputation as a novelist. Their distinguished son was born in Dublin, and educated at Harrow. Having formed an attachment for a beautiful and accomplished girl, Elizabeth Linley, daughter of a musician, he contracted with her a romantic marriage in 1773. Thrown upon his own resources for a livelihood, he produced *The Rivals* in 1775; in the next year appeared *St. Patrick's Day; or, The Scheming Lieutenant*; and he delighted the town with *The Duenna*, an opera, for which his father-in-law prepared the music; it had a run of seventy nights, and remained a favourite for some years. Sheridan now embarked as part-proprietor of Drury Lane Theatre, and in 1777 produced *A Trip to Scarborough*, based on Vanbrugh's *Relapse*; and a few months later appeared *The School for Scandal*, which, notwithstanding its faults, is the best English comedy of manners that holds the stage. Two years later (1779) Sheridan brought out *The Critic*, the most brilliant dramatic burlesque in the language, similar to Buckingham's famous *Rehearsal*. As a dramatist, Sheridan has retained a high and well-deserved place in public esteem. *The School for Scandal* is a brilliant comedy of intrigue, remarkable alike for the splendour of its satire, the brilliancy of its wit, its sparkling repartee, and mastery of dramatic incident. Sheridan relies on the Restoration comedy for his inspiration; but he eschews its licence, for indulgence in which the greater comedies of his masters—Congreve, Vanbrugh, Wycherley—are lost to the stage.

The most brilliant portion of Sheridan's career was his public life in the House of Commons (which he entered at the age of twenty-nine), where he gained the friendship of Burke and Fox. At this time, too, he became noted in London for the brilliancy and fascination of his conversation. The culminating point of his Parliamentary career, which was a long, distinguished, and honourable one, was the part he took in the impeachment of

Warren Hastings. The success of his great speeches in the House and in Westminster Hall has often been related ; and as an example of brilliant, effective, and highly coloured rhetoric the oration on the Begum of Oude is one of the most noted in the language. Sheridan touched life on many sides, and had a restless and varied career. His mode of living was expensive, he was extravagant, and he lacked business habits ; these failings, and the burning of Drury Lane Theatre, brought on financial ruin, and his last years were clouded with monetary troubles and difficulties. His funeral was attended by the noblest and best in the land, and he was buried in Westminster Abbey, close to his great friend Garrick.

“ Whatever Sheridan has done, has been, *far excellence*, always the best of its kind. He has written the best comedy, the best drama (*The Duenna*), the best farce, and the best address (on Garrick) ; and, to crown all, delivered the very best oration ever conceived or heard in this country.”—BYRON.

## CHAPTER XIX.

---

### THE POETRY OF NATURE AND ROMANCE.

1. **Introduction.**—The classical spirit of the Augustan age and the frigid correctness of Pope had, during his lifetime, already produced somewhat of a revulsion towards naturalism in poetry. Among the ordinary aspirants to poetic composition he had few imitators, for these despaired of challenging a comparison in that artificial verse which he had perfected as a vehicle of lucid expression. Consequently we meet with a double movement of revolt against the metaphysical and classical in poetry; a revolt which tends on the one hand to the description and interpretation of nature, on the other to the revival of romance. The first and earlier of these movements, headed by the group of poets whose works represent the letters of the middle portion of the eighteenth century—1725 to 1775—culminated in the lyrics of Robert Burns; the second, introduced by the publication of Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), flowered in the narrative poetry of Sir Walter Scott. Both these movements were Scottish in their most successful exponents; and the first may be said to have originated north of the Tweed. We have already seen the influence exerted by Allan Ramsay (p. 302). Yet the credit of maintaining the school of naturalism in poetry during the Augustan age is mainly due to James Thomson.

2. **James Thomson** (1700—1748), the son of a Scotch minister, was born at Ednam, in Roxburghshire; he showed no aptitude or inclination for classical studies either at school or college. He had entered the University of Edinburgh in 1715, but it was not till 1724 that his success in a metrical version of the 19th Psalm decided him to try his fortune as a man of letters. He went to



London and obtained the post of tutor in a nobleman's family, where his leisure allowed him to complete his poem of *Winter*, published in 1726, the first of the series afterwards completed as *The Seasons*. *Summer* followed in 1727, *Spring* in 1728, and *Autumn*, with the *Hymn to Nature*, in 1730. His dramas, which had some success in their day, are now only remembered by the unfortunate line :—

O Sophonisba ! Sophonisba O !

parodied by a wit in the gallery as :—

O Jemmy Thomson ! Jemmy Thomson O !

which condemned the play and was subsequently altered to :—

O Sophonisba ! I am wholly thine.

The masque of *Alfred*, which he wrote in conjunction with David Mallet or Malloch, contains the celebrated song *Rule Britannia*, afterwards published over Thomson's initials, whose work we are thus justified in concluding it to be. The long poem of *Liberty*—three thousand lines of blank verse—conceived on the Continent in 1731, is deservedly forgotten; but the *Castle of Indolence*, composed in the Spenserian stanza, contains many fine passages, such as the following description of the Aeolian harp, "aerial music in the warbling wind" :—

Ah me ! what hand can touch the string so fine ?  
 Who up the lofty diapason roll  
 Such sweet, such sad, such solemn airs divine,  
 Then let them down again into the soul ?  
 Now rising love they fanned, now pleasing dole  
 They breathed, in tender musings, thro' the heart ;  
 And now a graver sacred strain they stole,  
 As when seraphic hands an hymn impart ;  
 Wild warbling nature all, above the reach of art !

If Thomson failed to earn for his poetry the title of "wild warbling nature all," which the alliterative art of the third line of the above extract would forbid, he at least led the way to scenes where—

Dark frowning heaths grow bright with Ceres' store  
 And woods imbrown the steep, or wave along the shore,

for readers whose view had been bounded by the suburban prettinesses of Twickenham. Thomson was not without a sense of

humour, as evidenced in his sketches of his friends in the *Castle of Indolence*; and his description of himself as "a bard—more fat than bard beseems," quoted by Dr. Johnson, has been repeated by all his biographers. He died in his forty-ninth year from the effects of a chill caught when sailing on the Thames.

3. **William Shenstone** (1714—1763) (described by Boswell as "a very ingenious and elegant gentleman") is known in English literature as the author of a pleasant poem in the Spenserian measure called *The Schoolmistress*, and a few pastoral poems. He was born at the Leasowes (a small family property), in Halesowen, Shropshire, and received his education at Pembroke College, Oxford. He seems to have spent most of his time in improving and beautifying his estate—till "his little domain became the envy of the great and the admiration of the skilful." The language of *The Schoolmistress* is designedly archaic:—

In every village mark'd with little spire,  
Embow'ed in trees, and hardly known to fame,  
There dwells, in lowly shade, and mean attire,  
A matron old, whom we schoolmistress name;  
Who boasts unruly brats with birch to tame:  
They griev'd sore, in piteous durance pent,  
Awed by the power of this relentless dame;  
And oft-times, on vagaries idly bent,  
For unkempt hair, or task unconner'd, are sorely shent.

His *Pastoral Ballad*, written in anapaestic measure (which ambles too monotonously), contains, nevertheless, lines of pleasant naturalness, and has, says Mr. Gosse, "all the pink and silver grace of a Watteau." The following misanthropic lines, *Written in an Inn at Henley*, are well known:—

Whoe'er has travelled life's dull round  
Where'er his stages may have been,  
May sigh to think he still has found  
The warmest welcome—at an inn.

4. **William Collins** (1721—1759), born in Chichester, the son of a hatter who was twice mayor of his native town, was educated at Winchester and Oxford. Vacillating between the army and the Church as a future profession, Collins came to London and irresolutely formed projects of literary work, only successively to abandon them as soon as formed. In 1747 he published a small volume of *Odes*,

then unappreciated, but since famous. Mortified by their non-success, he burned the remainder of the edition, a fate which befell much of his subsequent work at his own hands before reaching the permanence of print. Rendered somewhat independent by a legacy of £2,000 from a maternal uncle, he returned to his native town. His health, always feeble, now broke down, producing confirmed melancholia, to escape which he travelled on the Continent; but on his return in 1754 he became hopelessly insane, in which condition he lingered for five years, forgotten by all, save his sister, who tended him.

Of his work there remain less than two thousand lines, but these have been surpassed in their own style only, if at all, by the best work of Gray. These two poets cannot indeed be separated in any critical estimate of the poetry of the period. Collins's *Odes* anticipated Gray's *Elegy* by three years; both writers had the misfortune of being poets who "fell on an age of prose." While in London Collins had made the acquaintance and gained the affection of Dr. Johnson; and, like Gray, he agreed in theory, though scarcely in practice, with the great literary dictator in preferring the intellectual element to all others—in fact, in assuming the great object of literature to be moral precept. The very titles of Collins's *Odes*—*To Liberty*, *On the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland*, *The Passinos*, *The Manners*, *To Peace*—read like the subjects of philosophic essays.

The *Ode to Evening* has many coincidences with Gray's *Elegy*: indeed, the impressionism of such lines as

Be mine the hut,  
That, from the mountain's side,  
Views wilds and swelling floods,  
And hamlets brown, and dim-discover'd spires,  
And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all  
Thy dewy fingers draw  
The gradual dusky veil,

of the former reaches a higher imaginative level than

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,  
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,

of the latter. Again, the line—

Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight

in the *Elegy* is more than equalled by the imaginative realism of the similar lines in the *Ode* :—

Now air is hush'd, save where the weak-eyed bat  
With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing,  
Or where the beetle winds  
His small but sullen horn.

Indeed, feeling prevails over intellect in both poets.

In the *Ode to the Passions* Collins, while wanting in the note of distinctiveness, resembles Shelley in vague, shadowy visions—in luminous impressions full of suggestion, as when Love—

Shook thousand odours from his dewy wings.

And though it is amongst elegiac poets that Collins must be classed, he is none the less a great lyrist, as in the short so-called *Ode* :—

How sleep the brave, who sink to rest,  
By all their country's wishes blest !  
When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,  
Returns to deck their hallowed mould,  
She there shall dress a sweeter sod  
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.

By fairy hands their knell is rung,  
By forms unseen their dirge is sung :  
There Honour comes, a pilgrim grey,  
To bless the turf that wraps their clay,  
And Freedom shall a while repair,  
To dwell a weeping hermit there.

The poetry of Collins is the first articulate protest against the formality of the followers of Pope, "the first particle in the stream of romanticism"; and gives in its best passages, where the poet shakes off the external conventionalities of form and diction, an anticipation of Wordsworth and the later romanticists.

"In the little book of odes which dropped, a still-born immortal, from the press, and was finally burnt up even to the last procurable copy by the hands of the author in a fever-fit of angry despair, there was hardly a single false note; and there were not many less than sweet and strong."—SWINBURNE.

5. **Thomas Gray** (1716—1771). The poetry of this period reached its highest sustained level in the work of Thomas Gray, who, to the perfect polish of Pope, added a sympathy with nature and with



the romantic school which links him alike to Wordsworth and to Scott. Born in London at the close of the year 1716, he was educated at Eton, to which he dedicated his *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, and proceeded in 1734 to Cambridge, where, with intervals of absence, he continued to reside till his death. He early showed a talent for Latin hexameters and elegiacs, and a facility for rendering the less well-known Latin authors into English verse. In 1739 he accompanied Horace Walpole, an old school-fellow, on an extended tour in France and Italy, and was deeply impressed by the sublimity of Alpine scenery. On the death, in 1741, of his father, Gray, after a brief attempt at the study of the law, retired with his mother to Stoke Pogis, and returned to Cambridge in 1742. Meantime, in the summer of the same year, the only period of remarkable creative activity in the short lifetime of the poet, he had composed his *Ode to Spring*, a sonnet on the death of his friend Richard West, the *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, and the *Hymn to Adversity*; and had also commenced his most celebrated poem, the *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard*. He henceforth lived a quiet literary life, acquiring vast stores of classical erudition, and projecting critical texts of Greek authors, and translations of minor Greek poets into Latin elegiacs, none of which ever went further than fragmentary efforts. He describes himself, at thirty years of age, as "lazy and listless and old, and vexed and perplexed"; and indeed listlessness seems to have been his besetting failing through life. It was not till the beginning of 1751 that Dodsley published the famous *Elegy* at the modest price of sixpence. In 1754 Gray completed the *Progress of Poesy*, the first of his Pindaric Odes, and in 1757 he printed it with *The Bard*, the latter the product of over two years of careful polishing. In 1768 he published three "imitations" of the Norse Eddas and Welsh poems, *The Fatal Sisters*, *The Descent of Odin*, and *The Triumphs of Owen*. The first of these, taken from a poem of the eleventh century, contains the fine stanza:—

Now the storm begins to lower  
    (Haste, the loom of Hell prepare !)  
Iron sleet of arrowy shower  
    Hurtles in the darkened air.

In the same year Gray was offered by the Duke of Grafton, and accepted, the chair of Modern Literature in Cambridge; and when the Duke became Chancellor of the University, the poet showed his gratitude by writing the *Installation Ode*. In 1771 Gray was attacked, while in London, by a severe attack of gout, a malady from which he had long suffered, and though he recovered sufficiently to return to Cambridge, he died there in July of that year, in his fifty-fifth year.

The question has often been asked, Why is it that Gray left behind him so small a literary product—how is it that he wrote so little poetry? The quality of what he has given us is high; the workmanship exquisite; but something like thirty lines a year, or less, would represent the quantity of his production. Matthew Arnold is disposed to find the reason in the shy and melancholic temperament of the man, and in the depressing and prosaic character of the age he lived in: the “spiritual east wind” which nipped his genius.

He was said by the best authorities to have been “perhaps the most learned man in Europe.” He had travelled a good deal, had made the “grand tour,” and had visited the most picturesque parts of the European Continent. When walking through the Alps to the famous monastery of the Grande Chartreuse, he says: “I do not remember to have gone ten paces without an exclamation that there was no restraining: not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry.” But throughout his life he was always in weak health, and generally in feeble and low spirits. “Low spirits,” he says, “are my true and faithful companions: they get up with me, and go to bed with me.” This is visible even in his *Odes*—even in his *Ode to Spring*, which we should naturally expect to be full of high hope and young life:—

To Contemplation's sober eye  
Such is the race of Man;  
And they that creep, and they that fly  
Shall end where they began.  
Alike the busy and the gay,  
But flutter through life's little day,  
In fortune's varying colours drest:

Brush'd by the hand of rough mischance,  
Or chill'd by age, their airy dance  
They leave, in dust to rest.

In spite of an unproductiveness almost amounting to sterility, Gray possessed at least two highly poetical qualities—a great love for flowers, and a capacity for friendship, for attaching to himself younger men as friends. When Mason's<sup>1</sup> wife lay dying of consumption Gray wrote to him:—

"I break in upon you at a moment when we least of all are permitted to disturb our friends, only to say that you are daily and hourly present to my thoughts. If the worst be not yet past, you will neglect and pardon me; but if the last struggle be over, if the poor object of your long anxieties be no longer sensible to your kindness or to her own sufferings, allow me (at least in idea, for what could I do, were I present, more than this?) to sit by you in silence, and pity from my heart, not her who is at rest, but you who lose her."

(i) "Knowledge, penetration, seriousness, sentiment, humour, Gray had them all; he had the equipment and endowment for the office of poet. . . . But he fell upon an age whose task was such as to call forth in general men's powers of understanding, wit, and cleverness, rather than their deepest powers of mind and soul. The task of the eighteenth century was not the poetic interpretation of the world, its task was to create a plain, clear, straightforward, efficient prose. . . . Gray's production was scanty, and scanty, as we have seen, it could not but be. He said himself that 'the style he aimed at was extreme conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous, and musical.' Gray's poetry may be said to have reached the excellence at which he aimed."—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

(ii) "As an elegiac poet Gray holds for all ages to come his unassailable sovereign position."—ALGERNON SWINBURNE.

6. **Mark Akenside** (1721—1770) was a precocious but very minor maker of verse, who published his *Pleasures of the Imagination*, a didactic poem of two thousand lines of blank verse, in 1744. He offered the manuscript to Dodsley for £120. The publisher showed it to Pope, who thought highly of it, and characterised its author as "no everyday writer." The event justified his judgment, for the poem captivated public opinion, and a cheap edition was called for within four months. This was at a time when the fire of true poetry had dwindled down to a few flickering

<sup>1</sup> William Mason—also a poet—who published the *Life and works of Gray*.

sparks among the embers. Akenside studied medicine at Leyden and London, and though at first unsuccessful as a practitioner, by the generosity of a friend, who fitted up a handsome house for him and allowed him £300 a year and a chariot, he gained a considerable practice and became physician to Queen Charlotte. He died of a putrid fever at the age of forty-eight. His success rendered him intolerably arrogant: he calls his verse "Reason clad in strains of harmony, selected minds to inspire." Most of his verse is the merest rhetoric and his *Odes* possess little spontaneity or originality.

May, thou delight of heaven and earth,  
When will thy genial star arise?

This (from an ode *On the Winter Solstice*) is a mere mechanical effort and requires little poetic gift to produce.

7. **James Beattie** (1735—1803) was a Professor of Moral Philosophy in Aberdeen, and something of a poet, whose books had a considerable vogue in the latter end of the eighteenth century. He had more taste than power: what power he had is imitative, and his verses remind one of Gray and Collins—but at a distance. He wrote his best-known poem, *The Minstrel*, in 1771 and 1774, and employed the Spenserian stanza, which he manages well:—

But who the melodies of morn can tell?  
The wild brook babbling down the mountain side;  
The lowing herd; the sheepfold's simple bell;  
The pipe of early shepherd dim descried  
In the lone valley: echoing far and wide  
The clamorous horn along the cliffs above;  
The hollow murmur of the ocean-tide;  
The hum of bees, the linnet's lay of love,  
And the full choir that wakes the universal grove.

8. **William Falconer** (1732—1769), son of a poor Edinburgh barber, began life as a seaman in the merchant service, and afterwards acted as a servant to the purser of a man-of-war. He next served as second mate of a ship which was wrecked in the Aegean on a voyage from Alexandria to Venice, three only of the crew being saved. This inspired him to write *The Shipwreck* (1762), a poem dedicated to the Duke of York, then rear-Admiral. The Duke had him rated as a midshipman on Sir E. Hawke's ship, the *Royal*



*George*. In 1769 Falconer published *The Universal Marine Dictionary*, in which the patriotism of an old sea-dog now and then broke out, as in his definition of "retreat"—"a French manœuvre, not properly a term of the British marine." He acted as purser to several frigates, and sailed in the *Aurora*, September, 1769. His vessel touched at the Cape, but was never again heard of, and is believed to have sunk off the east coast of Africa. Thus there was a kind of poetic fitness in the death of the author of *The Shipwreck*. His poem, interspersed with technical nautical terms and the language of real life, is often disfigured by inflated conventionality.

9. **Erasmus Darwin** (1731—1802), born at Elston Hall, Nottinghamshire, was educated at Chesterfield School and St. John's College, Cambridge. In 1754 he went to Edinburgh to study medicine, and settled in 1756 as a physician in Nottingham, whence he afterwards removed to Lichfield. He was a strong advocate of temperance, and almost a total abstainer. In 1778 he bought eight acres of land near Lichfield, which he had laid out as a garden for the study of botany. Some verses of the local poet, Miss Seward, known as the "Swan of Lichfield," suggested his poem *The Botanic Garden*, of which the second part, entitled *The Loves of the Plants*, appeared in 1789, the complete poem not being published till 1792. It was admired by Cowper and Walpole, but successfully ridiculed by Canning in *The Anti-Jacobin*, under the parody of *The Loves of the Triangles*. Darwin's third son was the father of Charles Darwin, the great modern scientist. With the poems of the last four authors may be classed **James Grainger's** (1721—1766) *Sugar Cane*, which like the *Chase* of **William Somerville** (1692—1742) and the *Cyder* of **John Philips** (1676—1708), form the beginning and end of the school of "technical" poetry.

10. Of a very different calibre was **Thomas Chatterton** (1752—1770), a poet of "imagination all compact," who, a mere boy when he died by his own hand, left behind him poems which had mystified the critics of his own day, and have bewildered thinking men ever since. Thomas Chatterton, the posthumous child of a "sub-chaunter" of the church of St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, was born on November 20th, 1752. Of an erratic and ambitious temperament, alternately dreamy and eager for knowledge, even his childhood

showed signs of original ability. He early developed a taste for antiquities and for the surroundings of mediæval life—a taste fostered, no doubt, by the perusal of the contents of the muniment room of St. Mary's, to which the position of his uncle as sexton of the church would afford him ready access. At the age of twelve he appears to have already conceived the notion of producing poems in antiquated language and characters, which he might pass off as manuscripts found by him in the muniment-room, the work of a monk of the fifteenth century. Before these had assumed any very definite shape, a new idea took possession of the mind of this singular lad—namely, to invent and emblazon for an acquaintance, a respectable Bristol pewterer, a pedigree and coat of arms, alleged to have been discovered amongst the old parchments removed by his late father from St. Mary Redcliffe. For this he received from the tradesman the sum of five shillings. To this pedigree were appended certain poetic effusions of the supposititious monk Rowley, in continuation of Chatterton's original design. Though the forged pedigree was speedily repudiated by the College of Heralds, its versatile author was not thereby deterred from further efforts; and soon after produced, for the benefit of a local antiquary, documents bearing on the ancient history of Bristol, mostly the supposed work of the monk Rowley, which the antiquary unsuspectingly embodied in his writings. Meantime Chatterton had, in 1767, been apprenticed to a local attorney; but the strict and irritable nature of his employer galled and chafed the proud and sullen temper of his apprentice, and led, after an unfriendly connection of three years, to a quarrel, in which the attorney cancelled the indentures of his apprentice, and the latter started for London, in the hope of making his way as a man of letters. Previous to leaving Bristol, Chatterton had been in communication with Dodsley, the publisher, and with Horace Walpole, whose *Castle of Otranto* had been lately published. To the former he had offered unsuccessfully the tragedy of *Aella*, which he ascribed to the monk Rowley; and the latter had been requested to peruse and correct the notes to copies of MS. poems by a certain "Abbot John of St. Augustine's," another creature of Chatterton's vivid imagination. From Walpole he received a friendly and courteous

letter, and the critic seems to have been completely deceived by the lad's forgeries. On receiving, however, a second letter from Chatterton, explaining his real position, and asking for patronage to procure him some post which might enable him to "pursue his natural bent," Walpole's caution was alarmed; and he broke off all relations, stating afterwards, in justification of his action, that he "could consider him under no aspect but that of a youth who endeavoured to impose on me." Chatterton arrived in London in 1770, and for some months supported himself by journalism, and by composing songs, and even a musical extravaganza, for the public gardens. Such sources of income, at best precarious, soon showed signs of failing utterly; and the poet, relying on some knowledge of the rudiments of surgery, hoped to obtain a post as surgeon's mate in the merchant service. Nothing came of this, and, after enduring for some days the pangs of slow starvation, the unhappy youth committed suicide by poison, on August 24th, 1770, while he still wanted some three months of his eighteenth birthday.

His best work is undoubtedly to be found in the "Rowley" poems—that is to say, in those writings which he professed to have copied from early English Mss. For years after his death there were persons to be found staunchly to uphold the genuineness of these productions; and even so late as 1857 an essay by a writer of reputation supported the view that they were built up on slight but genuine foundations. But it has been conclusively shown by Dr. Skeat that the language, metre, and rimes are alike inconsistent with a date in the fifteenth century, when they were alleged to have been written. The slight knowledge of Anglo-Saxon words displayed in them is traceable to the dictionaries of Kersey and Speght, to which he seems to have had access, and from which he appears to have copied, with slight variations and some errors, his archaic vocabulary. But the very fact that these poems are, in their attribution to a fifteenth-century author, palpable forgeries, is the highest testimony to the wonderful ability and originality of the friendless lad who could produce them. As poems they exhibit mature thought, dramatic force, and beauty of expression. The following is part of a chorus, from the tragedy of *Goddwyn* :—

When Freedom, dressed in blood-stained vest,  
 To every knight her war-song sung,  
 Upon her head wild weeds were spread,  
 A gory anlace by her hung.  
 She danced on the heath:  
 She heard the voice of death. . . .  
 Hard as the thunder doth she drive it on  
 Wit skilfully wimpled, guides it to his crown;  
 His long sharp spear, his spreading shield is gone,  
 He falls and falling rolleth thousands down.  
 War, gore-faced War, by envy burl'd, aris't  
 His fiery helmet nodding in the air,  
 Ten bloody arrows in his straining fist.

The work of Chatterton, accomplished at an age when other lads had scarce left school, will always remain a wonder to the thoughtful: his wretched life and tragic death have formed a subject for the poet, the essayist, and the painter.

The marvellous Boy,  
 The sleepless Soul that perish'd in his pride,

exclaims Wordsworth. In the vision of Shelley in *Adonais*

Chatterton  
 Rose pale, his solemn agony had not  
 Yet faded from him.

Where we may soft humanity put on,  
 And sit, and rhyme, and think on Chatterton:

says the sympathetic Keats.

"One looks back," says Professor Masson, "again and again on his brief existence with a kind of awe, as on the track of a heaven-shot meteor earthwards through a night of gloom."

11. **James Macpherson** (1736—1796).—Another controversy of much wider interest sprang up on the appearance of the translations from the Gaelic poems of Ossian by James Macpherson, a man of very different type of character from Chatterton. Born a farmer's son at Kingussie, Inverness-shire, he taught school for a while, and studied for the ministry. In 1760 he published a small volume with the title *Fragments of Ancient Poetry translated from the Gaelic or Erse Language*. This aroused a great deal of interest; a subscription was raised to enable Macpherson to pursue further investigations in the Highlands, and collect the floating popular poetry then existing. After an extended tour Macpherson pro-



duced, in 1761, *Fingal*, and two years later *Temora*, and these met with an astonishing success. Every one read them and wondered. The Scotch at this time were not popular in England, for in 1745 the wild Highlanders had been marching on London. It was a matter of astonishment to most men that the third and fourth centuries should have given birth to such poems, and that they should have been preserved among a barbarous people for 1400 years. The fame of the poems spread; they were translated into many European languages, were warmly received in Germany, and, in a new Italian dress, delighted Napoleon. But many at home doubted; some, notably Johnson, openly attacked their authenticity; and a literary war arose, which has since continued, and the last ink seems not to have been spilt on them yet. The grounds for the spuriousness of the Ossian poems may be thus broadly stated: The poems are based on Irish, and not on Scotch, traditions, and the scenes and personages are so confused that incidents are recounted of Fingal or Fionn a couple of centuries apart. This in itself would not be a serious objection, for Celtic legends are common to Scotch and Irish alike, and some confusion does exist even in authentic Gaelic legends of the heroic age. The whole colouring of the poems and their civilised tone are too modern for the age in which they are pitched; and, as Wordsworth says, "a dream has more substance than the whole state of society, as there depicted." The half-spectral character of the figures, the undefined and misty nature of the scenes and incidents, are in striking contrast to the heroes who stand out prominently in the pages of the ancient Gaelic epics we possess. Of the professed manuscripts that Macpherson asserted he possessed, only a portion of *Temora* was published by him; and in 1807 about half the Gaelic texts of the poem appeared, nearly half a century after the publication of his first volume. Critics now maintain the modernity of the text; and just as no manuscript of the poems has been discovered written before Macpherson's time, neither is it known by what means Macpherson then prepared the poems, for he was not a genuine Gaelic scholar, as his supporters admit. The truth seems to be that Macpherson heard a good deal of oral tradition, and that he

made use of this as a foundation for his work. Though his Ossianic poems are of an unsubstantial, inflated, and rhetorical character, yet they contain much that is full of colour and imagery; they have a wild grandeur, and a genuine sympathy with nature—that special characteristic of the Gaelic temperament—which give them a true touch of poetry and romance, that left its mark on the literary spirit of the age.

Unlike Chatterton, Macpherson made £1200 by his poems; he withstood his critics, and his friends and admirers fought his battles; he became a politician, entered Parliament, and when he died was buried in Westminster Abbey.

The following passages illustrate Macpherson's style:—

I have seen the walls of Balclutha, but they were desolate. The fire had resounded in the halls; and the voice of the people is heard no more. The stream of Clutha was removed from its place, by the fall of the walls. The thistle shook, there, its lonely head: the moss whistled to the wind. The fox looked out from the windows, the rank grass of the wall waved round its head. Desolate is the dwelling of Moina, silence is in the house of her father.—From *Carthor*.

Rise, moon! from behind thy clouds. Stars of the night arise! Lead me, some light, to the place where my love rests from the chase alone! his bow near him, unstrung: his dogs panting around him. But here I must sit alone, by the rock of the mossy stream. The stream and the wind roar aloud. I hear not the voice of my love! Why delays my Salgar, why the chief of the hill, his promise? Here is the rock, and here the tree! here is the roaring stream! Thou didst promise with night to be here. Ah! whither is my Salgar gone?—From *Songs of Selma*.

Like autumn's dark storms, pouring from two echoing hills, towards each other approached the heroes. Like two deep streams from high rocks meeting, mixing, roaring on the plain; loud, rough and dark in battle meet Lochlin and Innis-fail. Chief mixes his strokes with chief, and man with man; steel, clanging, sounds on steel. Helmets are cleft on high. Blood bursts and smokes around. Strings murmur on the polished yews. Darts rush along the sky. Spears fall like the circles of light, which gild the face of night. As the noise of the troubled ocean, when roll the waves on high. As the last peal of thunder in heaven. Such is the din of war! Though Cormac's hundred bards were there to give the fight to song; feeble was the voice of a hundred bards to send the deaths to future times! For many were the deaths of heroes; wide poured the blood of the brave!—From *Fingal*.

Chatterton and Macpherson stand alone untouched by any influence, but with Cowper we reach the starting-point of a new era in poetry.

B. 12. **William Cowper** (1731—1800).—Of a good family—son of the Rev. Dr. Cowper, Chaplain to George II.—the poet was born, in 1731, in his father's rectory of Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire. Of a sensitive and timid nature, Cowper as a boy endured much rough treatment from his fellow-pupils at a boarding-school, and in consequence became, he tells us, both a coward and a liar. He was afterwards sent to Westminster School, and acquired some proficiency as a writer of Latin verse. On leaving school he was articled to an attorney, where he had as a fellow-clerk the future Chancellor Thurlow. After three years' apprenticeship Cowper removed to the Inner Temple, joined a literary set, and contributed to literary journals. In 1756 his father died, and seven years later he was seized with melancholia and attempted to commit suicide. Loneliness, inaction, and despair of success in life seem to have been the causes of his malady, which did not assume a religious form till later years. The immediate occasion of his attempt on his life was his nomination to the office of Clerk of the Journals in the House of Lords—visions of unfitness for the post, of disaster when examined before the Lords, haunting the unhappy man to the overthrow of his reason. He was consigned to a private asylum, where judicious treatment effected a speedy cure. Meantime he had lost a small legal post which he had held, and diminished his already scanty private means; so that he owed to the generous assistance of relatives and friends the provision of a small income, on which he retired to a quiet life at Huntingdon.

13. **Religious Influence.**—The Wesleyan revival now profoundly affected Cowper's ideas, and induced in him a gentle mysticism, which, when not unduly excited by injudicious influences, rendered him quietly happy, though always self-condemnatory. He joined the household of the Rev. William Unwin, a clergyman who had, like the poet himself, been much influenced by the Wesleyan teaching. The sudden death of Unwin broke up the home at Huntingdon, and the family, including Cowper, went to reside at Olney, in Buckinghamshire. They were attracted to this place by the personality of the Rev. John Newton, the curate-in-charge, a strongly Calvinistic Methodist, who himself

says that his "name was up about the country for preaching people mad." A man of a strong nature himself, the sternness of his creed suited his temperament; but it was far otherwise with Cowper. Under such an influence the poet's hypochondria naturally increased, and in the *Olney Hymns*, composed by him in partnership with Newton in 1779, a note of despondency is sometimes recognisable. His malady soon gained the mastery once more, and again he attempted suicide. Under medical treatment, however, his sanity was once more restored. To occupy his mind he was induced by Mrs. Unwin to commence a series of poems, first entitled *The Progress of Error*, afterwards better known as *Table Talk* (1782). An acquaintance which he made about this time, in Lady Austen, a baronet's widow, provided a better inspiration in poetry. The lady had told the story of *John Gilpin*, which next day Cowper had transformed into a ballad.

14. **The Task.**—She then suggested as a subject for what proved to be his longest poem, *The Sofa*, which on its completion in 1785 was renamed *The Task*, as having been commanded by Lady Austen. Here the poet had casually stumbled upon his true vocation. "What Pope is to our fashionable and town life," says Bagehot, "Cowper is to our domestic and rural life. This is, perhaps, the reason why he is so national." The publication of this poem brought to Cowper a fame which he neither sought nor dreamed of. He gave away the copyright to the publisher, and for it he never received any direct payment. In 1791 he published a blank verse *Translation of Homer*, whose works had been his favourite study at Westminster School. The translation is not devoid of merit, but has met with general neglect. Soon after, some unexplained misunderstanding led to the departure of Lady Austen, but her place was soon taken by his cousin, Lady Hesketh, who proved a true friend to the poet till her health failed in 1796. The same year saw the death of Mrs. Unwin, who had been stricken down with paralysis many years previously, and to whom in her helplessness Cowper addressed the beautiful poem *To Mary*. In his later years he wrote no more great poems, though he made one or two attempts at beginnings, but he composed those shorter poems on which his fame now mainly rests, such as



*The Loss of the Royal George, Alexander Selkirk, and The Needless Alarm.* He had two recurrences of his hypochondriac mania before his death at East Dereham, in 1800, in his sixty-ninth year.

15. **His Work.**—It is to Cowper's malady, and the shyness and timorousness begotten of his malady, that we owe his poetry and his delightful letters. He was unfit to struggle and to rough it at any time: he was still more unfit for such a struggle in the times into which he was born. It was an age when England was not only thoroughly prosaic, but coarse and unfeeling. The Church was a political force rather than a great religious institution; among the common people religion was at a very low ebb, and every class was given to drunkenness and brutality. Gambling, cock-fighting, bull and bear-baiting were ordinary amusements. Persons of quality went to Bedlam to see the insane, and to Bridewell to see women flogged; and parties of "ladies and gentlemen" were made up to witness a public execution, during the progress of which they ate and drank, and played cards; prisoners set in the stocks or in the pillory were subject to every sort of indignity and insult; the slave trade was engaged in by persons who regarded themselves as highly religious, including the Rev. John Newton himself before his ordination.

The extreme sensitiveness of Cowper's nervous system is apparent from his earliest boyhood, and from the time of its first appearance the cloud of insanity never entirely disappeared from his life. It was always hanging somewhere on the horizon, at different times it enveloped him, and the device most successfully employed for keeping it off was interesting and profound occupation. The cloud came down, dense and enveloping as ever, shortly before he died, and this he made plain in the last poem ever written by him, which he called *The Castaway*, wherein he compares his own fate with that of a seaman who has fallen overboard from Admiral Anson's ship.

Obscurest night involved the sky,  
The Atlantic billows roared,  
When such a destined wretch as I,  
Washed headlong from on board;  
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,  
His floating home for ever left. . . .

No voice divine the storm allay'd,  
 No light propitious shone,  
 When, snatched from all effectual aid,  
 We perished, each alone :  
 But I beneath a rougher sea,  
 And whelmed in blacker gulfs than he.

His reading in English literature was neither wide nor thorough ; though it is probable that he had read all Milton's poems, both Latin and English, with the greatest care. When Cowper read Johnson's *Life of Milton*, he was so enraged that he shouted, "Oh ! I could thrash his old jacket till his pension jingled in his pocket !" It is to the devotion and thoughtfulness of two good women—Mrs. Unwin and Lady Austen—that we owe the longest and best poem of Cowper. In a sonnet, "Mary, I want a lyre with other strings," one of the sweetest sonnets in the language, he commemorates for Mrs. Unwin her "chronicle of actions just and bright,"—and the suggestion of Lady Austen induced, as we have seen, Cowper to write *John Gilpin*, a poem which has added to the mirth of many generations of children. The latter lady also inspired the well-known and powerful lines, *On the Loss of the Royal George*.

Cowper was a most careful and earnest worker—an assiduous and fastidious artist in verse ; and it was in the quiet excitement of his perfect and elaborate workmanship that he was able to forget the dark clouds that overshadowed his life. Sometimes three lines a day represented his total production ; but, when he came to translate Homer, his regular day's work amounted to forty lines. "Despair," he says, "made amusement necessary, and I found poetry the most agreeable amusement. Had I not endeavoured to perform my best, it would not have amused me at all. The mere blotting of so much paper would have been but indifferent sport." Besides charming away his besetting disorder, there was in Cowper's mind a higher purpose—to teach his contemporaries by entertaining them.

I scribble rhyme  
 To catch the triflers of the time,  
 And tell them truths divine and clear  
 Which, couched in prose, they will not hear.

In another poem, *Retirement*, he says:—

Me poetry (or rather notes that aim  
Feebly and faintly at poetic fame)  
Employs, shut out from more important views,  
Fast by the banks of the slow-winding Ouse;  
Content if thus sequestered I may raise  
A monitor's, tho' not a poet's praise.

✓ Cowper's friends, like Gray's, were anxious that he should be Poet Laureate; and his opinion on this office and its effects is worth recording: "Heaven guard my brows," he writes to Lady Hesketh, "from the wreath you mention. It would be a leaden extinguisher clapt on my genius, and I should never more produce a line worth reading."

It is in his shorter poems that Cowper displays most fully his ease of movement, his sweetness, charm, and grace. The smallest and most trifling incident of the day calls forth a poem. Cowper was essentially an original writer; he deserted the mannerisms of Pope, and turned in the direction of simplicity and truth. His poetry breathes uniformly a religious feeling, almost totally absent from English poetry since Milton's death. Southey, speaking of his poetry as compared with Pope's, called the latter "formal gardens in comparison with woodland scenery"; and there is no doubt that Cowper began a new order in poetry. Not only is he, like Thomson, a poet of nature, he is also pre-eminently the poet of the pure and simple human affections; and in both these respects he was no unworthy precursor of Wordsworth.

"Cowper, first of English poets, dared a consistent simplicity of subject and of treatment. He discerns with the poetic eye the beauty of the most inconspicuous natural objects, nor does his interest in them ever wane. Out of unconsidered trifles, left by all the other poets, his poems are woven, for he is a faithful student of the details of life."—PROFESSOR MACNEILE DIXON.

16. **George Crabbe** (1754—1832), whom Byron called "Nature's sternest painter, yet her best," was born at Aldeburgh, a small seaport in Suffolk, on Christmas Eve of the year 1754. His father was a schoolmaster (with a fondness for literature and mathematics), and afterwards saltmaster—*i.e.*, collector of the

salt duties—at Aldeburgh. The son was educated by his father, who did his utmost for the growing boy. The father had his reward: he lived to see his son a famous man; and he had, late in life, the keen pleasure of transcribing with his own hand his son's poem of *The Library*. In his fourteenth year young Crabbe was apprenticed to a surgeon; when his apprenticeship had expired, however, he was compelled to go back to the drudgery of the harbour and the quay. He next attempted to start as surgeon in his native town; but in this profession he did not succeed, and in despair he resolved to try his fortune in London. With one coat, a case of surgical instruments, some manuscript poems, and three pounds in money, he set out for the metropolis. One of the poems he took with him was produced by a publisher; but, while the book was coming out, the publisher failed, and Crabbe got nothing for his work. Starvation looked him in the face; and he wrote to the Prime Minister (Lord North), to the Lord Chancellor (Thurlow), and to other noblemen; but there was no answer from any of them. At length he sent a letter, with the manuscript of *The Library* and *The Village* enclosed, to Edmund Burke, who saw their merits, and offered him a home in his own house, which the poet was only too glad to accept. Burke introduced him to Dodsley, the bookseller, who published the former work for him in 1781; to Fox, to Sir Joshua Reynolds, to Dr. Johnson, and to other distinguished men. *The Library* was an immediate success; and Crabbe's fortune was now practically made. Dr. Johnson read the manuscript of *The Village* (which was published in 1783) and pronounced it "original, vigorous, and elegant." Lord Thurlow asked him to breakfast; and, at parting, thrust a £100 note in his hand. Crabbe now (1781) took holy orders; Burke induced the Duke of Rutland to make him his chaplain; Thurlow gave him two livings; other benefices followed; and in 1789 he settled at Muston, in Leicestershire, and for many years gave up his time and thoughts to his parish work. In 1814 he obtained from the son of his old friend, the Duke, the living of Trowbridge, in Wiltshire, where he died in the beginning of 1832.

17. **Crabbe's Works.**—In addition to the poems already



mentioned, he published *The Parish Register* (1807), *The Borough* (1810), *Tales in Verse* (1812), and *Tales of the Hall* (1819). *The Borough* is probably his best work. For the last thirteen years of his life he published nothing. The subjects he selected for his verse were the pauper and the workhouse, tramps, poachers and smugglers, gypsies and gamblers, and landscapes arid, barren, squalid, and miserable. He tried to paint things as they are: "Auburn and Eden can be found no more": the stern truth of things and the misery of the poor filled his thoughts and his pen.

Fled are those times when in harmonious strains  
The rustic poet praised his native plains;  
No shepherds now, in smooth alternate verse,  
Their country's beauty, or their nymph's rehearse.

His subjects were the coast-life of Suffolk, the squalid village with its hideous workhouse, its half-starved people, its dull sterile landscape, the sufferings of the toilers for bread—intensified by anxiety and concealed by pride, the hopeless descent into parish relief—sympathised with by no one, not by the absentee landlord, nor the quack doctor, nor the fox-hunting parson. Crabbe possessed three remarkable gifts: the power of painting an east coast landscape; the power of subtle observation with bold description of the workings and passions of the human mind—its tragedies, its comedies, and its humours; and an almost unequalled command of pathos. Crabbe's marked characteristics are his love of minute description, and a strong predilection for shadow and gloom. He strikes a far-off note of misery, whose louder echo is heard in the cry of the realistic novelist of our own day, whose prevailing tone is one of pessimism and despair.

#### A STORM ON THE EAST COAST.

View now the Winter-storm! above, one cloud,  
Black and unbroken, all the skies o'ershroud. . . .  
All where the eye delights, yet dreads to roam,  
The breaking billows cast the flying foam  
Upon the billows rising—all the deep  
Is restless change; the waves so swelled and steep,  
Breaking and sinking, and the sunken swells,  
Nor one, one moment, in its station dwells: . . .  
Curled as they come, they strike with furious force,

And then, reflowing, take their grating course,  
 Raking the rounded flints, which ages past  
 Rolled by their rage, and shall to ages last.

From *The Borough*.

#### THE PARISH WORKHOUSE.

Theirs is yon House that holds the parish poor,  
 Whose walls of mud scarce bear the broken door;  
 There, where the putrid vapours, flagging, play,  
 And the dull wheel hums doleful through the day;—  
 There children dwell who know no parents' care;  
 Parents, who know no children's love, dwell there! . . .  
 The lame, the blind, and, far the happiest they!  
 The moping idiot, and the madman gay.

From *The Village*.

(i) "His great defect is an incurable want of taste. . . . In the midst of a passage of sustained tragic pathos he shocks us by the appearance of some incredibly mean thought or word; his shrewd humour runs without restraint into coarseness; and he frequently oversteps the line that divides the horrible from the terrible."—PROFESSOR COURTHOPE.

(ii) "Crabbe, the poet laureate of East Anglia, cannot be passed over in any sketch, however slight, of the period to which he belongs. . . . As portrait or as landscape painter he impresses equally; he never fails to leave an impression of power in the gloomy realism of his village tales. Poetry is here, for the first time, the vehicle of social reform."—PROFESSOR MACNEILE DIXON.

18. **William Blake** (1757—1827) was a poet, painter, and engraver of very rare but undoubted genius. There was nothing like his poems in the eighteenth century; there has been nothing like them since. At a time when the influence of Pope was supreme in England, Blake wrote songs and poems that seemed to belong to a different order of things. People said he was insane; and to some extent this was true: he dwelt in an unreal world—in the world of pure imagination; he saw what others did not see; he felt what others did not feel; yet he gave utterance to his thoughts in language of the simplest and the purest kind. And all his poems, with one exception, were issued embedded in pictures and ornamental designs of his own, drawn and engraved by his own hand. The text and the design were worked on copper-plates; and the prints were coloured by himself or his wife. He wrote some of the sweetest and simplest lyrics in the language, and he is best known by his *Songs of Innocence* (1787) and his *Songs of*

*Experience* (1794). His simplicity was quite unconscious: he was himself a child to the last. Blake's style is, of its kind, quite perfect; and his rhythms are among the finest and subtlest in all English poetry. He was in complete revolt against the stilted and artificial poetry of the eighteenth century. His work, in fact, seems to be the first bright streak of the golden dawn that heralded the approach of the full and splendid daylight of the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge. In the song *My Silks and Fine Array* there occurs this verse, with much of the lyric touch of Shakespeare and Beaumont:—

His face is fair as heaven  
 When springing buds unfold;  
 Oh, why to him was't given  
 Whose heart is wintry cold?  
 His breast is love's all-worshipped tomb  
 Where all love's pilgrims come.

Very different from the poetry of reason and the chiselled verse of the eighteenth century is the following:—

Ah! Sunflower! weary of time,  
 Who countest the steps of the sun,  
 Seeking after that sweet golden clime,  
 Where the traveller's journey is done—  
 Where the youth pined away with desire,  
 And the pale virgin shrouded in snow,  
 Arise from their graves and aspire  
 Where my sunflower wishes to go.

In a quaint style he has written many short apophthegms in metre:—

A tear is an intellectual thing,  
 And a sigh is the sword of an Angel King,  
 And the bitter groan of a martyr's woe  
 Is an arrow from the Almighty's bow.

The countless gold of a merry heart,  
 The rubies and pearls of a loving eye,  
 The idle man never can bring to the mart,  
 Nor the cunning hoard up in his treasury.

A Robin Redbreast in a cage  
 Puts all Heaven in a rage;  
 A skylark wounded on the wing  
 Doth make a cherub cease to sing.

Blake was a mystic, and wrote a number of prophetic books. He carried into his verse his symbolism, which, in its shapelessness and undefined dress, is the chief characteristic of his poetry; yet throughout his poems there are flashes of a peculiar genius, which are unlike anything to be found in the eighteenth century. Though a Londoner—and he lived in London all his life—Blake was a pure romanticist. But no imitation, however clever, no rhetoric, can come near that “combination of extreme simplicity with unearthly music” that is to be found in many places in Blake’s poems.

19. **John Home** (1722—1808), a clergyman of the Scotch Church, became famous as the author of *Douglas*, a tragedy which was acted in Edinburgh in 1756. It was a great success both in Edinburgh and in London, but the author was obliged to resign his ministry. He then became private secretary to the Earl of Bute, and afterwards tutor to the Prince of Wales, who, when he came to the throne, granted to Home a pension of £300 a year. He produced several other plays, which have sunk into oblivion. Home was the subject of extravagant praise by the critics of his own day, and has suffered for it. Yet few passages in English dramatic verse are better known, or more hackneyed, than that beginning with the lines:—

My name is Norval: on the Grampian Hills  
My father feeds his flocks—

while the young hero Douglas has appealed to the romantic imaginations of youthful readers for over a century.

20. **Robert Burns** (1759—1796).—No more remarkable example of the changing conditions from the old order of things to the new is to be found at this period in our literature than Robert Burns, the greatest poet that Scotland has produced. He was born near the town of Ayr, where his father, a man of great piety and integrity, “was gardener and overseer to a gentleman of small estate.” In Burns’s seventh year a farm was taken near the Brig o’ Doon, and he afterwards described the life the family led as having “the cheerless gloom of a hermit with the unceasing moil of a galley-slave.” Burns received the rudimentary education of a peasant lad; the family were fond of reading, and Robert was the



most steadfast reader of all. Every spare moment he could find—and they were not many—he gave to his books; and he made acquaintance with the best English writers in prose and verse. Notwithstanding the incessant labour on the farm from morn till night, Burns contrived to learn French, mathematics, and a little Latin. On the death of his father in 1784, the family removed to a farm, which Robert and his brother had taken some months previously, at Mossgiel. The poet was then in his twenty-sixth year, and for the next four years he worked laboriously; but the farm did not pay. It was during the struggle of these years that his genius as a poet ripened; he had written many love verses and songs before this, but now the circumstances of his life called forth his unrivalled powers as a satirist, and he was filled with the hope that he might become the national poet of his time.

21. **His Early Satires.**—Burns was a man of sturdy independence of character; the sentiments of Revolutionary Europe were then in the air, and these he eagerly imbibed. His poetry is the outcome of a genius in revolt against the accepted state of things in life and conduct. The elemental passions were strong in Burns; to them he at times gave way and was carried beyond the bounds of reason and good conduct, which brought down upon him the censure of the Church. His landlord, Gavin Hamilton, fell also under its censure, and Burns championed his patron's quarrel in his own. Scotland at that time was stirred by a religious controversy, the rival parties being known as the New Lights and the Auld Lights. The spread of the new liberal ideas took the form among the New Lights of a desire for more freedom of thought and action, and for a relaxation of the stern rule and discipline of the Calvinistic Church of Scotland. Burns describes the situation thus: "Polemical divinity about this time was putting the country half-mad, and I, ambitious of shining on Sundays, between sermons, in conversation parties, at funerals, etc., in a few years more used to puzzle Calvinism with so much heat and indiscretion that I raised the hue and cry of heresy against me, which has not ceased to this hour." Into the controversy Burns plunged, and wrote a series of powerful and scathing

satires, in which he wields the lash with a vigorous hand, scourging hypocrisy and Church abuses. The lash is no light one: it is a whip tipped with lead, and every stroke cuts deep. The most noted of the satires are *The Holy Fair*, *Holy Willie's Prayer*, and an *Address to the Unco Guid, or the Rigidly Righteous*. Much criticism has been expended on these satires, and censure and approval, depending on the point of view taken, have been freely passed upon Burns. Into this question it is needless to enter; it is sufficient to say that Burns was perfectly justified in using satire as a means of stripping the Church of abuses, and the professors of religion of their cloak of hypocrisy and cant, worn as a cover for sin. Yet it is to be regretted that in doing so he allowed his satire to overstep the boundary of decency and good taste. In striking contrast to the satires, he wrote at the same time *The Cottar's Saturday Night*, in which he shows a keen sympathetic appreciation of true religion in the humble home of a peasant. The years 1784 to 1786 were the most productive in all Burns's poetical career. To this short period belong the satires, a series of epistles, and poems so diverse as *The Cottar's Saturday Night*, *The Two Dogs*, *Address to the De'il*, *The Jolly Beggars*, *Hallowe'en*—a prolific stream of verse, showing that a great singer had arisen in the land beyond the Tweed.

22. **First Publication.**—In 1786 Burns decided on publishing his poems, and in the summer of that year the famous Kilmarnock edition appeared. At this time he was beset with difficulties; he decided to leave Scotland and settle in Jamaica, and took a passage in a vessel with this object in view. But the vessel was delayed; and owing to the success of the poems and the advice of friends he abandoned the project, and was encouraged in the winter of that year to visit Edinburgh. Here he became the lion of a season among the highest circles in the Scottish capital, and astonished everybody by his manly bearing, his great conversational gifts, and by his mental vigour and independence of thought. The second edition of his poems, published in Edinburgh, was largely patronised, and Burns realised a sum of about £500. The volume contained several additional pieces—*Address to the Unco Guid*, *Death and Doctor Hornbook*, *The Ordination*, and others.

Burns spent the summer of the next year in travelling through Scotland, and the winter in Edinburgh. But the learned and aristocratic circles now showed a coldness to him, and Burns left the capital in the spring of 1788 an embittered and disappointed man. He again turned to his old life, rented a farm at Ellisland, on the banks of the Nith, six miles from Dumfries, and married Jean Armour, whom he had long loved, and whom in all honour he was bound to make his wife. Soon after he was appointed exciseman at a salary of £50 a year, and the new duties so interfered with his farming that he gave up the land in 1791, and went to live in Dumfries. During the residence at Ellisland he wrote some songs and one of the finest of his poems—*Tam O'Shanter*. The remaining years of Burns at Dumfries were not happy; his reputation suffered a great decline, while his duties as an officer, his social habits, and his despondency prevented any great and sustained effort in the realm of verse in these his more mature years. But his muse was by no means idle, for he gave forth during this period a bright flow of melody in the form of a number of songs, the ripest fruit of his lyrical genius. In these he struck the true fount of song, and has enriched poetry with a wealth of melody unrivalled of its kind in our literature.

James Johnson of Edinburgh was at this time engaged in compiling *The Musical Museum*, a collection of Scottish songs, and to this Burns contributed 184, mostly original. In 1792, after his removal to Dumfries, he assisted in a similar venture by George Thomson; this collection was to be a select one, and the music composed or arranged by the best masters of the day. To this Burns contributed sixty songs; both these generous contributions were made without any remuneration. He settled the matter once for all when he wrote: "As to any remuneration, you may think my songs either above or below price, for they shall absolutely be the one or the other." No wonder Burns was poor! The songs were priceless, and had he turned his genius to mercenary ends, practical man as he was in many ways, he could have freed himself from the carking care that pursued him to the end.

Burns, whose force in literature, as we have said, was one of

revolt, openly showed his sympathy with the Revolution in France, which helped to injure him in a social point of view. He sent to the Directory, with a letter of sympathy, four carronades purchased at the sale of a smuggling vessel which he himself had led the dragoons to capture; but the guns never got beyond Dover. This act of foolish enthusiasm, and other indiscretions, brought on him the censure of the authorities. But Burns was a thorough patriot, and he stirred the country and touched the national heart and caused it to throb with pride, in the war lyric, *Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled*. In 1795, during the scare of Napoleon's threatened invasion, he wrote a song for the volunteers, in which he himself was enrolled, that resounded throughout the land and fired it with enthusiasm:—

Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?  
Then let the loons beware, sir!  
There's wooden walls upon our seas,  
And volunteers on shore, sir. . . .  
Be Britain still to Britain true,  
Amang oursels united;  
For never but by British hands  
Maun British wrangs be righted!

The independence of spirit so characteristic of him, and the bitterness he felt in his Dumfries days, found expression in the famous verses, *A Man's a Man for a' that*. The sands of time ran all too fast for Burns, and he died on July 21st, 1796, in the thirty-eighth year of his age, of a fever acting on a constitution thoroughly undermined.

23. **His Work.**—The total amount of Burns's work as a poet is not great; but it is phenomenal, when we come to consider his upbringing, his great and exhausting struggle throughout his whole life to earn a livelihood, and that he was never able to devote himself to poetry as his sole occupation. It is doubtful, indeed, if Burns at any time was equal to a great and sustained effort in poetry, for at no period of his life did the circumstances of his daily drudging toil admit of it. His genius, too, took no spiritual eagle-flights, like that of Shelley, which longed to soar and speculate over wide domains; it was rather of the rapidly creative and concentrative kind, that concerned itself more with



the prosaic things of daily life. A son of the soil himself, he became the great interpreter of the Scottish peasantry, lightening their lot by his humour, the sympathy of his genius, and his kinship with them. Never was the life of the poor represented in such light and colour as by Burns in *The Cottar's Saturday Night*, in which he portrays with loving touch the household of his father, and, as has been well said, "has thrown a halo of poetry round the life of the Scottish peasant that could never have been dreamt of as possible by many even in our own land."

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,  
 They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;  
 The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,  
 The big ha' Bible, ance his father's pride;  
 His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,  
 His lyart haffets<sup>1</sup> wearing thin and bare;  
 Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,  
 He wales<sup>2</sup> a portion with judicious care;  
 And "Let us worship God" he says, with solemn air.

In *The Twa Dogs*, Caesar and Luath are painted true to life, and discuss the old yet ever-reviving question—the comparison between the lot of the poor man and the rich. The argument is maintained with great force and rare humour, the balance being fairly well kept, though the piece is written from the poor man's point of view. When Luath says—

But will you tell me, Master Caesar,  
 Sure great folk's life's a life o' pleasure?  
 Nae could nor hunger e'er can steer them,  
 The very thought o't needna fear them—

the rich man's dog replies—

Lord, man, were ye but whyles whare I am,  
 The gentles ye wad ne'er envy 'em.  
 It's true they needna starve nor sweat,  
 Through winter's cauld, or simmer's heat;  
 They've nae sair wark to craze their banes,  
 And fill auld age wi' grips and granes:<sup>3</sup>  
 But human bodies are sic fools,  
 For a' their colleges and schools,  
 That when nae real ills perplex them,  
 They mak 'enow themsels to vex them;  
 And aye the less they hae to sturt<sup>4</sup> them,  
 In like proportion less will hurt them.

<sup>1</sup> grey temples.

<sup>2</sup> selects.

<sup>3</sup> pains and groans.

<sup>4</sup> trouble.

Comment on the wit, wisdom, and philosophic reflection of this stanza, especially the last six lines, is needless.

In handling the native Scottish dialect Burns was hardly ever equalled, much less excelled. He uses it with great power and directness, and illuminates a whole thought with a single word or pointed phrase; he is a master of the art of clear, precise, and definite illustration. *The Jolly Beggars* is a brilliant *jeu d'esprit*, and of its kind can hardly be matched in our literature. It is instinct with life, movement, and abandoned mirth. Across the stage of "Poosie Nansie's" public-house moves a band of carousing, ragged vagrants, ripe for a merry night of tippling jollity, laughter, and song. The sordid elements are subdued in tone, and, though overflowing with humour, the poem is more free of vulgarity than the characters would lead us to expect. The painting is strikingly realistic, and has all the fidelity of the Dutch school. The songs, sung in character, are brilliant, and the last, in tripping measure, with its chorus—

A fig for those by law protected !  
Liberty's a glorious feast !

is one of the most spirited in the language.

In *Hallowe'en* the folklore of the Ayrshire peasantry, with all the old customs, superstitions, and practices of this celebrated season, is described with great humour, keen insight, and the same strength and directness of touch so characteristic of his descriptive pieces :—

The lasses feat,<sup>1</sup> and cleanly neat,  
Mair braw than when they're fine;  
Their faces blithe, fu' sweetly kythe,<sup>2</sup>  
Hearts leal,<sup>3</sup> and warm, and kin':  
The lads sae trig,<sup>4</sup> wi' wooer-babs,<sup>5</sup>  
Weel knotted on their garten,  
Some unco blate,<sup>6</sup> and some wi' gabs,<sup>7</sup>  
Gar lasses' hearts gang startin'  
Whiles fast at night.

For vivid, yet terse, description and perfection of detail, it would be hard to equal in a single verse the following picture of a rushing burn :—

<sup>1</sup> trim.

<sup>2</sup> true.

<sup>3</sup> double loops.

<sup>7</sup> talk.

<sup>2</sup> show.

<sup>4</sup> spruce.

<sup>6</sup> unusually bashful.

Whyles owre a linn the burnie p'lays,  
 As through the glen it wimpl't;<sup>1</sup>  
 Whyles round a rocky scaur<sup>2</sup> it strays;  
 Whyles in a wiel<sup>3</sup> it dimpl't;  
 Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,  
 Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle;  
 Whyles cookit<sup>4</sup> underneath the braes,  
 Below the spreading hazel,  
 Unseen that night.

Tennyson would seem to have caught the echo of this stanza in his poem *The Brook*.

*Tam O'Shanter* is the finest of Burns's longer poems—a tale in which he gives the fullest flight to his fancy and imagination. Scene follows vivid scene with dramatic intensity, as he runs over the gamut of human feeling, touching with equal skill the pathetic and grotesque, the humorous and the horrible, the real and the supernatural. The picture of Tam, "fast by an ingle," is drawn with firm hand in a few bold strokes:—

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,  
 E'en drown'd himsel amang the nappy!<sup>5</sup>  
 As bees flee hame wi' lades<sup>6</sup> o' treasure,  
 The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure:  
 Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,  
 O'er a' the ills o' life victorious.

The description in the poem of Kirk Alloway graveyard recalls Chaucer's Temple of Mars, and Spenser's Cave of Despair; and Burns shows the same power of horrible suggestiveness in single lines, such as—

The grey hairs yet stack to the heft.

The witches' frolic is inimitable, remarkable both for its conception and the realistic description of the scene. Tam's disclosure of his presence, his terror and flight, with the loss of the mare's "ain grey tail" as she reaches "the keystone of the brig," are described with the same sustained vigour.

When Burns used pure English he was at a disadvantage. This is seen especially in *The Cottar's Saturday Night*, which at times is laboured and unequal, while it suffers from his selection of the Spenserian stanza as a medium for the poem. Burns could,

<sup>1</sup> wheeled. <sup>2</sup> cliff. <sup>3</sup> eddy. <sup>4</sup> appeared and disappeared. <sup>5</sup> ale. <sup>6</sup> loads.

however, use pure English with real effect,<sup>1</sup> and his finest verses in it are those *To Mary in Heaven*, written on the third anniversary of the death of Mary Campbell, a girl to whom he had been deeply attached:—

Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,  
That lov'st to greet the early morn,  
Again thou usher'st in the day  
My Mary from my soul was torn. . . .

Still o'er these scenes my memory wakes,  
And fondly broods with miser care!  
Time but th' impression deeper makes,  
As streams their channels deeper wear.  
My Mary! dear departed shade!  
Where is thy place of blissful rest?  
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?  
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

Had Burns adhered to the use of pure English, he would be but following the example of Smollett, Moore, and others, and adopting the fashion of the literary and professional circles of Edinburgh, who wrote in the stately periods of Addison and Johnson. But, true to his instincts, and contrary to the advice of friends, he held to his native Doric, and forced it into a permanent place in our literature. He quickened into vigour again the dying spirit of Scottish nationality; he restored to his countrymen the old world of thought and emotion to which they had long been strangers, and revealed to others the wealth of Scotland as a land of romance, of which Sir Walter Scott took up so splendid an inheritance.

24. **His Songs.**—Burns's great legacy to the world, and that upon which his reputation principally rests, is his songs. As a national lyricist, he rises chief over all. His soul was a well-spring of melody, that poured forth, not only the clear stream rising from its own depths, but purified the current of verses that came from other sources. Burns possessed a supreme wealth of lyric passion, intensity of feeling, and unrivalled power over the emotions and the primal elements in human nature. He astonishes by his spontaneity of feeling to the subject presented, by his rapidity in catching the fleeting thought, and by the perfection of his art in the selection of the words in which to clothe it—words that play



on the ear with rhythmic melody. He is supreme master of the art of lyrical expression; and, while truly national, he appeals to the sentiments and the emotions of the universal human heart. The song, *Àe Fond Kiss*, is, it has well been said, "the alpha and the omega of feeling, and contains the essence of an existence of pain and pleasure distilled into one burning drop." The following four lines have become the last words in the tragedies of the burning passion:—

Had we never loved sae kindly,  
Had we never loved sae blindly,  
Never met—or never parted,  
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

Burns shows in his songs the same variety of subject, and the same versatility of treatment as in his other poems. His love songs are the most numerous; and in felicity and, on the whole, in purity of expression and in the variety of phase of sentiment and illustration, he shows matchless skill and originality of genius.

The following lines (*There was a Lass and she was Fair*) can hardly be excelled for chaste delicacy of feeling, and for the beauty of the simile:—

As in the bosom o' the stream,  
The moonbeam dwells at dewy e'en;  
So trembling, pure was tender love  
Within the breast o' bonny Jean.

Burns was quick to respond to every mood and aspect of external nature, which gave colour, tone, and true Celtic feeling to his sentiments and emotions. This is evident in most of his work; but it is sufficient to point to such songs as *Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonny Doon*, *O wert thou in the Cauld Blast*, and *Of a' the Airts the Wind can Blaw*, a beautiful song addressed to his wife, the last verse of which runs:—

I see her in the dewy flowers,  
I see her sweet and fair:  
I hear her in the tunefu' birds,  
I hear her charm the air:  
There's not a bonny flower that springs  
By fountain, shaw,<sup>1</sup> or green,  
There's not a bonny bird that sings,  
But minds me o' my Jean.

---

<sup>1</sup> thicket.

25. **His Character: an Estimate.**—Much speculation has been expended on what Burns might have accomplished were his fate other than it had been. But all such speculation is idle. Few figures in literature have been the subject of so much diversity of judgment; in none has the personal character of the poet been so minutely examined, from none have so many morals been drawn. His early manhood had been one of the most wearing physical labour; and his years in the Excise, in which he proved a zealous officer, were given to exacting duties and exposure to all kinds of weather. Burns was a man of a highly strung poetic temperament, and he quaffed deep and exhausting draughts from the springs of passion and emotion; and there can be no doubt that indulgence in the habits arising from boon companionship, then so common in Scotland, to which he too often gave way, proved ruinous to such a temperament and constitution. He was a man of the keenest sensibilities and most tender feeling, and his heart was ready to respond to every form of suffering. He is full of sympathy for, and is intensely touched by the pathos in a wounded hare, a field-mouse whose nest is turned up by a plough, the death of Mailie, an old pet ewe, while the *Auld Farmer's New Year's Salutation to his Auld Mare Maggie* shows a rare power of identifying the feeling existing between man and his favourite animal. With a heart and intellect so responsive and receptive as his, his wide human sympathy and his eager passionate nature were ever ready to be played on by any cry of suffering or pain. In all his work he was absolutely sincere, truthful, and independent. Few men have been so tried in the furnace of temptation as Burns; and when we think of his Edinburgh days, and the excursions through Scotland, honoured and fêted as he was, the wonder is that the catastrophe was not immediate. But he was saved by the sanity of his genius, his saving grace of humour, and by his rare and penetrating gift in analysing the characters of men. That the disappointments of life, the unrealised aspirations of such a spirit and genius as his, and that struggle between the higher and lower nature—incidental to all but intensified in him—proved too much for Burns, need not be wondered at, however they may be regretted. No man ever knew

his own faults and failings better than Burns. He was no sickly sentimentalist in the revelation of his sufferings; he spares himself little in these, and the verdict on this matter had best be left where he himself left it:—

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone  
Decidedly can try us,  
He knows each chord—its various tone,  
Each spring—its various bias;  
Then at the balance let's be mute,  
We never can adjust it;  
What's done we partly may compute,  
But know not what's resisted.

His early death was one of the saddest and most pathetic in the whole annals of literature. But the neglect into which he fell in his last years in Dumfries has been amply avenged in the quick and full recognition of his genius; and there is no name, among the many brilliant sons that Scotland has nursed, so much beloved among her children as that of Robert Burns.

(i) "Few men have had so much of the poet about them, and few poets so much of the man; the man was probably less pure than he ought to have been, but the poet was pure and bright to the last."—ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

(ii) "No poet of any age or nation is more graphic than Burns: the characteristic features disclose themselves to him at a glance; three lines from his hand and we have a likeness. And, in that rough dialect, in that rude, often awkward metre, so clear and definite a likeness."—CARLYLE.

(iii) "The songs of Burns . . . do not affect to be set to music; but they actually and in themselves are music; they have received their life, and fashioned themselves together, in the medium of harmony, as Venus rose from the bosom of the sea. The story, the feeling, is not detailed, but suggested; not *said*, or spouted, in rhetorical completeness and coherence; but *sung*, in fitful gushes, in glowing hints, in fantastic breaks, in *warblings*, not of the voice only, but of the whole mind."—*Idem*.

(iv) "In no mention of his songs should that be forgotten which is so greatly to the honour of Burns. He was emphatically the purifier of Scotch song. . . . So purified and ennobled by Burns, these songs embody human emotion in its most condensed and sweetest essence. They appeal to all ranks, they touch all ages, they cheer toil-worn men under every clime. . . . Whenever men of British blood would give vent to their deepest, kindest, most genial feelings, it is to the songs of Burns they spontaneously turn, and find in them at once a perfect utterance and a fresh tie of brotherhood. It is this which forms Burns's most enduring claim to the world's gratitude."—PRINCIPAL SHAIRP.

## CHAPTER XX

### SIR WALTER SCOTT AND THE ROMANCE NOVEL.

1. **The Romantic Movement.**—The effect of French influence on the English literature of the Restoration had been to introduce a spirit fatal to romance. This influence was accentuated by the *Don Quixote* of Cervantes and by the *Gil Blas* of Le Sage. Towards the close of the eighteenth century signs were not, however, wanting of a revulsion in popular feeling, of which the first literary expression is found in the *Castle of Otranto, A Gothic Story: translated from the original Italian*. The novel bearing this title, published in 1764, was in reality the work of the celebrated virtuoso **Horace Walpole**, whose mock Gothic mansion of Strawberry Hill exhibited in lath and plaster, what his mock translation from the Italian put forward in literature. This novel, a tale of supernatural terror, appealed vividly to the public imagination, starved by the realism of Fielding and Smollett. The following year saw a much healthier offspring of the reviving spirit of romance, in the publication of the *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765). This volume was the compilation of **Thomas Percy** (1729—1811), the son of a grocer at Bridgnorth, who was educated at the Grammar School of that town and at Christ Church, Oxford. His presentation to a college living enabled him to gratify his literary tastes, to edit Surrey's poems and the works of the Duke of Buckingham, to translate a Chinese novel from the Portuguese and *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry* from the Icelandic. The chance finding, at the house of a friend, of an old manuscript collection of ancient ballads inspired him with the idea of publishing "our best old ballads," in which undertaking he was assisted by Shenstone (p. 372). The



appearance of the *Reliques* excited public interest both in their contents and in their compiler. Percy became chaplain and secretary to the Duke of Northumberland, with whose house he claimed kinship; in 1778 he obtained the deanery of Carlisle, and four years later the Irish bishopric of Dromore, which he held till his death in 1811. The literary interest excited by the *Reliques* may be said to mark the dawn of the Romantic movement in English literature. Scott and Wordsworth alike acknowledge their obligation to its influence, and Beattie's *Minstrel* was inspired by the *Essay on the Ancient Minstrels* prefixed to the collection.

The work of Walpole meanwhile did not fail of producing imitators of its rather meretricious style. First of these was **Miss Clara Reeve** (1729—1807), whose *Old English Baron* (1777) seeks to avoid the supernatural, to which her original owes most of its interest, and to keep within "the utmost verge of probability." A new keynote was struck by **William Beckford** (1759—1844) in his highly successful and original Oriental romance of *Vathek* (1787). Written originally in French, it bears many traces of French influence; but it is so imbued with the daring spirit and the vivid imagination of its author, that the ludicrous is forgotten and the impossible becomes possible for its readers. The model set by Walpole and Miss Reeve was followed by **Mrs. Anne Radcliffe** (1764—1823), whose *Romance of the Forest* (1791), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and *The Italian* (1797) enjoyed extraordinary popularity in their own day. Full of glaring anachronisms and mawkish sentimentality as these works are, their author has yet been said to have portrayed in them the man "that Lord Byron tried to be."

The next writer of this school is **Matthew Gregory Lewis** (1775—1818)—commonly called "Monk" Lewis from his best known work, *The Monk*, published in 1795—who revels in atrocities, and whose horrors are directly based on satanic influence through the agency of a female Mephistopheles. His *Tales of Wonder*, in verse, to which Sir Walter Scott was a contributor, form the low-water mark of absurdity in the pseudo-romantic movement. A more vigorous and original writer is **Charles Robert Maturin** (1782—1824), much the ablest contributor to the "School of Terror." Born

in Dublin of one of the Huguenot families settled there, he was grandson of Swift's successor in the deanery of St. Patrick's, and son of a Government official of good position in his native city. He graduated at Trinity College, Dublin, where he obtained a scholarship, entered the Church, and early took to literature. He produced, under a pseudonym, three novels which met with some success, and for one of which he obtained £80 from the publishers. His next work was a drama entitled *Bertram*, which, though refused by Kemble, was recommended by Scott and Byron to Kean, and produced by him in 1816 with triumphant success. The extravagance and improvidence of its author kept him poor; and much of the proceeds of his successful drama, from which he received £1,000, was swallowed up in the liabilities of a bankrupt relative, for whom Maturin had been security. Two other plays proving unsuccessful, he returned to novel-writing, and in 1820 produced his masterpiece, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, which influenced Scott and Byron, and has earned the praise of many critics of his own day and since. He died at the age of forty-three.

All these writers may be classed as the "Pseudo-Romantic School," the school of terror and of the supernatural, who drew their inspiration from the German ballads of Bürger<sup>1</sup> rather than from the old English ballads of Percy's *Reliques*, however much the latter may have influenced the former. Meantime, in Scotland a great genius was slowly and patiently delving the channel in which was to flow the current of the English Romantic School; was tentatively exercising his wonderful powers first as a paraphraser of Bürger's *Lenore*, then as a collector and illustrator of Border minstrelsy, next as a writer of romantic poetry, and finally as the teller of tales which were to gain for the novel a popularity hitherto undreamt of, and to earn for their narrator the title of "The Wizard of the North."

2. Sir Walter Scott (1771—1832), ninth of twelve children, was born in Edinburgh on August 15th, 1771. His father, a Writer to the Signet,<sup>2</sup> is portrayed for us by his gifted son in the Alexander

<sup>1</sup> Gottfried August Bürger, a German poet (1748-1794).

<sup>2</sup> A special class of solicitors in Scotland. They were originally clerks in the office of the Secretary of State, and prepared the writs to be sealed under the royal signet.

Fairford of *Redgauntlet*. He came of gentle blood, of the Border clan of the Scotts of Buccleugh. One of his ancestors, "Auld Wat of Harden," is mentioned in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*; another was the unwilling husband of "Meikle-mouthed Meg, the ugliest woman in four counties." From her Walter is thought to have inherited the large mouth and long upper lip which lent a character of resolve to his face. A fever in his infancy, which threatened his life, settled in his right leg, and so contracted the sinews as to produce a slight but life-long lameness. One consequence of this misfortune was, that the child was given for some time into the charge of his grandfather, who resided at Sandy Knowe, near Smailholm Tower, a ruined keep which we afterwards meet in *The Eve of St. John*. Here, lying amongst the sheep, or clambering amid the crags, he early imbibed that taste for nature and romance which coloured even his childhood. He was educated at the High School of Edinburgh, to which he was sent in his ninth year, and proved a clever but erratic pupil; a spirited fighter in the "bickers" with the town boys, he was also much in request among his schoolfellows as a narrator of Border tales, of which he already possessed no small store. After a short stay at another school in Kelso, Scott, at the age of twelve, joined the law classes at Edinburgh University, and at fourteen was indentured to his father, and entered his office. Here he devoured history and legend, and commenced those excursions on foot through the neighbouring counties in search of old ballads and tales, which he continued for the greater part of his life. With his practical temperament he became a sound lawyer, as indeed might be inferred from his works, and was called to the Bar in 1792, though he never proved successful as an advocate.

3. **First Literary Work.**—His first literary effort was a translation of Bürger's ballad, *Lenore*, which he completed in a single night in 1795; this was in the hope of favourably impressing the daughter of a baronet of his acquaintance, a young lady for whom Scott cherished a romantic but very real passion, which was reciprocated by its object, but which family opposition turned to misunderstanding. In 1797 the slighted lover conceived a new attachment for Mdlle. Charpentier, the pretty daughter of a French royalist, who had fled

to England on her father's death, and whom he married on Christmas Eve of the same year. She possessed good sense, good temper, and a fortune of £200 per annum; and made a good and affectionate wife, though scarcely an inspiring helpmeet to the poet. Exactly two years later Scott was appointed Sheriff-Depute of Selkirkshire with a salary of £300 a year.

4. **The Border Minstrelsy.**—He had contributed, as we have seen, some tales in verse to "Monk" Lewis's *Tales of Wonder*; and he now prepared, and published in January, 1802, the first two volumes of the *Border Minstrelsy*, the introduction and copious historical illustrations in which may be taken as affording the earliest foretaste of his work as a novelist. The book was highly successful, an edition of 800 copies being disposed of within the year. Another volume was added in 1803, in which were included many original poems, which gave promise of the longer works now about to appear. Indeed, the advertisement, in the summer of 1803, of the third volume of the *Border Minstrelsy* announces as "in the press, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, by Walter Scott, Esq.;" though the poem did not appear till 1805. For some years Scott halted between his practice at the Bar and literature; but the success of the *Lay*, and his intimacy with his old school-fellow James Ballantyne, led him to devote himself to literary pursuits. In 1806 he was appointed one of the Clerks of Session, which, with the shrievalty, subsequently brought him an official income of £1,600 a year.

5. **His Romantic Poetry.**—Scott speaks of the *Lay*, the first of his longer poems, as "a long poem, . . . a kind of romance of Border chivalry in a light horseman sort of stanza," which he intended to include in the third volume of the *Border Minstrelsy*. But the work grew on his hands; and what was originally suggested by Lady Dalkeith as a poem on the legend of the Goblin Page, developed into the first instalment of a kind of Scottish national epic, giving promise and foretaste of "the best battle-poetry in the English tongue." Never did poem so accurately hit the happy moment for its appearance. Scott's inherited warlike instincts, his long training in Border romance, the reaction from the correct school of Pope, and the publication of the *Border Minstrelsy*, had combined to fashion a singer and an audience fitted for each other. It was



a fortunate circumstance that events had so shaped the poet's career that he was thirty-four years of age before his first great work appeared; and its success was phenomenal. The quarto edition of 750 copies was at once exhausted, and an octavo edition of 1,500 copies was sold within twelve months. Within a quarter of a century 44,000 copies of the poem were in the hands of the public. A sum of nearly £800 rewarded the author's labours, and his career as a man of letters was now assured. Three years later, in 1808, appeared his greatest poem, *Marmion*, followed in 1810 by *The Lady of the Lake*, and in 1812 by *Rokeby*. Scott had not, however, confined his activities entirely to poetry. A few months after the appearance of *Marmion* he produced an edition of Dryden, a task for which he received no less than £1,500; and in the year 1814 he edited the works of Swift, to which he contributed a biographical memoir. Meantime, he had, as his circumstances improved, successively changed his residence from a cottage at Lasswade to a beautiful little house at Ashestiel; in 1812 he purchased the Tweedside farm of Abbotsford, and commenced that career of building and planting which so materially aggravated his later financial difficulties, by inducing him constantly to fore-stall the pecuniary results of his literary successes. These were, however, more directly due to the partnership into which he had entered, in 1805, with the brothers Ballantyne, whom he had started in business some years previously as printers; to which business was added that of booksellers and publishers in 1809.

**6. His Later Poetry.**—Scott, an indefatigable and systematic toiler, did not fail to work the poetic vein which had proved so successful. *The Vision of Don Roderick*, inspired by the successes of Wellington in the Peninsula, the proceeds of which were devoted to the relief of the Portuguese sufferers from the campaign, had appeared in 1811; and in 1813 he published anonymously *The Bridal of Triermain*, having apparently some lurking suspicion that this new field in the realm of Arthurian romance would give little room for the popular exercise of his poetic gift. In 1815 appeared *The Lord of the Isles*, the last of his poems. Though marked by passages of great beauty and vigour, and with its scene laid amid surroundings alike of place and epoch which

might be supposed most suitable for the display of his utmost powers, this poem has somehow failed to take that hold on the public imagination, which has marked the course of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion*, and *The Lady of the Lake* from their first publication to the present day.

But a new literary career had already commenced for its author, in which his triumphs as a poet were to merge and pale. Already, in 1805, Scott had turned aside for a while from his work in editing Dryden to write the first chapters of a romantic novel, based on the incidents of the rebellion of 1745. This had been thrown aside, and had lain unnoticed, till the growing popularity of the poetry of Byron, and the serious financial difficulties of the firm of the Ballantynes, in which, as we have seen, he was a partner, led him to take up and complete this fragment, and under shelter of anonymity to make a new departure in search of public favour. He may have been partly induced thereto by the publication, in 1808, of *Queen-hoo Hall*, an unfinished romance by the antiquary Joseph Strutt, which had been arranged and added to by Scott. With that wonderful sanity of judgment which marked his literary career, with that marvellous gift of seizing and adapting an idea from which another had drawn only failure, Scott perceived how the element of romance which had given such popularity to his poems was equally suitable for embodiment in prose tales. *Queen-hoo Hall* had shown him that the pure Elizabethan dialect of its characters was "a language too ancient" for ordinary readers. As he says himself, "He that would please the modern world, yet present the exact impression of a tale of the Middle Ages, will repeatedly find that he will be obliged, in despite of his utmost exertions, to sacrifice the first to the last object." With balanced judgment, and vast stores of legendary and historical information, with a mind which held a great portrait-gallery of characters—noble, whimsical, shrewd, ludicrous, or romantic, ranging from the astute Edinburgh lawyer to the village innocent, from Mary Queen of Scots and her great rival Elizabeth to Jeanie Deans, the daughter of the cowfeeder in St. Leonard's—Scott entered on his new career.

7. **His First Novel.**—*Waverley*; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since, which appeared in 1814, fairly took the world by storm. "Opinion!" said Lord Holland, when asked his of the new book; "none of us went to bed all night, and nothing slept but my gout." And the effect of the book on its readers was deep as it was widespread. When Miss Edgeworth's *Tales of Irish Life* had appeared, Scott's quick appreciation had grasped the possibilities of his own country for similar treatment; and writing in 1829 the general preface to the *Waverley Novels*, he says, with characteristic modesty, "I felt that something might be attempted for my own country of the same kind; . . . something which might introduce her natives to those of the sister kingdom in a more favourable light than they had been placed hitherto." And nothing characterises these novels, more than half of which have their action laid in Scotland, than their intensely Scottish feeling and atmosphere. The poems had, indeed, awakened an interest in Scotch scenery; crowds of English tourists set out to visit Loch Katrine and its neighbourhood; and an enthusiasm for Highland landscape was created, the effects of which are still visible in Scotland from Pentland Firth to the Cheviot Hills. But the novels succeeded in peopling the scenery of Scotland with characters so lifelike and so interesting that the country became, to quote Mrs. Oliphant—

"for a moment the most distinct and clearly evident of all the quarters of the earth, the chosen land of all that was humorous and all that was pathetic, full of an unsuspected and inexhaustible variety of character and wealth of emotion. . . . We ourselves can scarcely realise to ourselves what it would be to Scotland to sweep Scott out of her. . . . The veil was drawn from her face not only to other nations, but even to her own astonished and delighted inhabitants, who had hitherto despised or derided the Highland caterans, but now beheld silently with amazed eyes the real features of their uncomprehended countrymen, just as England and the more distant world awoke to know the 'land of the mountain and the flood.'"

For the next seventeen years novel after novel appeared with astonishing rapidity. Through nearly the whole of this period of unexampled literary creativeness, Scott persisted in keeping up the mystery as to the authorship of these novels; and although his disguise was penetrated by many from the first appearance of *Waverley*, and had long become an open secret, it was only

in February, 1827, at the Theatrical Fund Dinner, that he publicly acknowledged himself to be "The Author of *Waverley*." In 1814 Scott visited London, where he made the acquaintance of Byron and Rogers, dined with the Prince Regent, afterwards George IV., and was fêted and "lionised" by society. In 1815 the news of the victory of Waterloo induced him to visit Brussels and Paris. In the latter city he was presented to the Czar of Russia and, what he doubtless esteemed a greater honour, to the Duke of Wellington, in whose victorious career he had always taken the greatest interest. During this trip he wrote *Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, a very ordinary diary originally intended for his own family, but published as soon as completed. George IV., on his accession to the throne in 1820, conferred on Scott a baronetcy, and prided himself on its having been the first creation of his reign; and when he visited Edinburgh in 1822 Sir Walter was the first to welcome him with somewhat extravagant loyalty.

8. **His Bankruptcy.**—The year 1825 brought with it a financial crisis, in which the publishing firm of Constable failed for a quarter of a million, and their failure involved the Ballantynes. The latter, always needy, sanguine, and speculative, finally succumbed to their liabilities; and Sir Walter Scott, proud of his probity, determined to attempt the seemingly impossible task of paying off, by his own literary exertions, the liabilities, amounting to £117,000, of the firm of which he had been for years a partner. In his desire to become something like the old Border chieftains, he had spent large sums, which he earned for his literary work, in the purchase of the Abbotsford estate, on the banks of the Tweed, near Melrose, and in the erection of a castle in the baronial style; so that he had nothing left to meet the liabilities. But in two years he earned for his creditors £40,000, his *Life of Napoleon* realising £18,000, and by December, 1830, the debt was decreased to £54,000. The creditors had marked their sense of his exertions by a present to him, as an heirloom to his family, of Abbotsford and all its contents, which he had surrendered to them. But the terrible struggle, and the loss of his wife, who had died in 1826 at the commencement of his troubles, undermined a constitution which had already shown signs of



decay; and in 1831 increasing symptoms of brain disease decided his medical advisers to insist on a Mediterranean voyage, for which the Government of the day placed a frigate at his disposal. He visited Malta and Naples, and a faint gleam of hope was the momentary result; but on his return journey by land from Rome he was struck down by apoplexy and paralysis at Nimeguen. He only survived to reach home and linger for two months, when on September 21st, 1832, he passed peacefully away, and was laid to rest beside his wife in Dryburgh Abbey;—"one of those rare natures," says Sir Leslie Stephen, "for whom we feel not merely admiration but affection." Interesting personal details of Scott will be found in his *Journal*; but the story of his strenuous endeavour, his single-mindedness, and his noble purpose to fulfil what he considered to be his duty to his creditors is best told in the *Life* by his son-in-law, John Gibson Lockhart.

9. **His Work.**—The work of Sir Walter Scott is truly phenomenal in amount, in variety of performance, and in the excellence achieved in the most diverse fields of literary activity. His poetry, the subject of much adverse criticism, has claims to distinction which none can fail to recognise. Some of his lyrics are of a high order of merit—indeed, he may be said to have perfected the lyrical ballad; his longer poems have descriptive passages of great truth and beauty, and his battle-pieces are amongst the finest in the language. True, the principal characters are seldom more than automatons; but his prose makes ample amends for this defect. His *Life of Napoleon*, his edition of the works of Dryden and Swift, and the *Tales of a Grandfather* are still standard works in their own departments. But it is on his novels that his fame must ultimately rest. No author, save Shakespeare, had before his time enriched our literature with such a gallery of portraits. And in form, too, no writer is so varied, none so final as "The Author of *Waverley*." "In his works," says Professor Raleigh, "the novel proper and the romance, which had been long coquetting with each other, were at last wedded. Sir Walter Scott is the first of the modern race of giants in fiction; his rapid series of novels inaugurates a new era."

10. **His Novels.**—In *Waverley* he skilfully chose the most romantic period in the modern history of these islands; his Highlanders afforded primitive types of feudal devotion, and in Charles Edward he had the last champion in arms of the claims of the exiled Stuarts. Fergus MacIvor, otherwise Vich Ian Vohr, is not more truly a feudal chief than Evan Dhu Maccombich is a feudal clansman; and when the verdict of "Guilty" has been pronounced on both, and the latter asks "if the Saxon gentlemen are laughing" at his offer of six of the best of his clan, himself the first, to be "justified" instead of his chief—that is, to die for Vich Ian Vohr—no heart can refuse a throb of sympathy. In *Guy Mannering* Scott broke entirely new ground. It is the first and best of his novels of private life; and is one of those books to which the reader instinctively returns again and again, so perfect is the art of the story-teller. The predictions of the stars, the ruin and rehabilitation of an ancient house, founded on tradition if not on actual fact, form the romantic basis of a modern tale; and among its characters Meg Merrilies the gipsy, Dominie Sampson, Dirk Hatteraick the smuggler, nay, the very dogs of Dandie Dinmont, have all the vividness of reality. *The Antiquary* approaches still more closely to the form of the modern domestic novel: it is a simple story of ordinary Scottish life, and Edie Ochiltree, the "Gaberlunzie man," and the Mucklebackits, every-day fisher folk, rising to tragic grandeur in the drowning of their eldest son, share the immortality of the antiquary Monkbarns. *The Black Dwarf* has no features of general interest, and may be classed with *Castle Dangerous*, his latest novel, as the nearest approach to failure which Scott has produced. In *Old Mortality* we have a brilliant and vivid picture of the obstinate struggle between the Covenanters and the Royalist forces under Graham of Claverhouse; and once more, as in *Waverley*, his hero is a Laodicean waverer, alive to both sides of the questions at issue; and once more such diverse types as Balfour of Burley and Graham of Claverhouse, Mause Headrigg and her son Cuddie, take their permanent place in the memory of his readers. This is a novel whose greatness grows with us as we grow in years; it is a masterpiece of historical painting, remarkable alike for its grasp of intricate details, its

intensity of feeling, and breadth of treatment. In *Rob Roy* Scott returns to the Highlands at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and the wrongs of the "nameless" Clan Macgregor,<sup>1</sup> and the stern vengeance of their wild chieftainess Helen Campbell, are relieved by the humours of Bailie Nicol Jarvie, the pragmatic Andrew Fairservice, and the half-savage Dougal "creature," who owns no law but his chieftain's will. With this tale may be classed the slighter *Redgauntlet*, with its echoes of *Waverley* and its many autobiographical allusions. J. G. Lockhart stated that he had no sort of doubt that Sir Walter unquestionably sat for his own picture in Allan Fairford. This novel contains, in "Wandering Willie's Tale," one of the best short stories ever written. In the same year as *Rob Roy* (1818) was published appeared *The Heart of Midlothian*, the heroine of which, Jeanie Deans, is one of the most attractive portraits of simple-minded unselfishness and whole-souled devotion to duty to be found in the whole range of fiction. The admirable portrayal of the stern though passionate Edinburgh mob, and the lurid scene of the Porteous riot, can only be paralleled in the Gordon riots of Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge*. The next novel of the series was the intensely tragic *Bride of Lammermoor*, the pathos of whose story lends itself more readily to the music of Donizetti than to the prose of Scott; but the ghastly croaking of the old watchers by the corpse of the ill-fated Lucy Ashton, and even the grim humour of the faithful Caleb Balderstone, harmonise with the sombre picture, which the late Mr. Gladstone, with questionable judgment, considered the finest of Scott's novels. At the same time appeared the short *Legend of Montrose*, with its animated descriptions of the meteoric successes of the Great Marquis, before the defeat of Philiphaugh crushed at one blow alike his own fortunes and the sanguine hopes of Charles I. The novel is, however, chiefly interesting for the inimitable creation of Major Dugald Dalgetty, the talkative but resourceful soldier of fortune who had served under Gustavus Adolphus, and who fought for

<sup>1</sup> This clan was several times proscribed, and by an Act of the Privy Council in 1603 the name of Macgregor was abolished under penalty of death. This was long enforced; but the Act was repealed towards the end of the eighteenth century.

"God and my Standard"; and as the precursor of a great series of romances, more directly historical than *Waverley* itself. These divide themselves naturally into groups: those of early Norman feudalism—*Ivanhoe*, *The Betrothed*, *The Talisman*, and *The Fair Maid of Perth*, with the later additions of *Count Robert of Paris* and *Castle Dangerous*; of Continental warfare—*Quentin Durward* and *Anne of Geierstein*; and the two great trilogies—one of the times of the last of the Tudors, *The Monastery*, *The Abbot*, and *Kenilworth*, and the other of the reigns of the first three of the four Stuart Kings, *The Fortunes of Nigel*, *Woodstock*, and *Peveril of the Peak*. There are also the somewhat nondescript *Pirate* and the novel of modern society, *St. Ronan's Well*, Scott's only effort in the style of Miss Austen.

II. **Novels of Norman Feudalism.**—Of the first especially of these groups, Sir Leslie Stephen, while deploring that the novels which constitute it are rapidly declining in critical favour, says, "*Ivanhoe* cannot be given up without some reluctance. The vivacity of the description, the delight with which Scott throws himself into the pursuit of his knick-knacks and antiquarian rubbish, has something contagious about it." *Ivanhoe* deals with the troublous times of England during the absence of Richard Coeur de Lion and the regency of his brother John. The title was suggested by the name of one of the manors, which an old rime mentions as forfeited by an ancestor of John Hampden for having struck the Black Prince at rackets, and it was selected by Scott, as he tells us, "because it had an ancient English sound." The book is noteworthy for the number of characters with which it has excited the imaginations alike of boyish and adult readers: Locksley and Friar Tuck, Cedric the Saxon and the Templar Brian de Bois Guilbert, Wamba the jester and Gurth the swineherd, while its rival heroines, Rowena and Rebecca, inspired Thackeray to write a burlesque continuation of the tale. In *The Betrothed* the scene is laid on the Welsh marches in the reign of Henry II.; but the romantic name of the castle of Garde Doloureuse fails to lend interest to a prosy tale, and Wilkin Flammock, the Flemish weaver, and Dame Gillian, wife of the old falconer, are more lifelike than the lay figures of knights



and ladies, tediously courteous and chivalrous in a strikingly unreal fashion. *The Talisman* shifts the scene to Palestine, and in addition to Richard of the Lion Heart and his stately rival Saladin, we have such characters as the Knight of the Leopard, the Grand Master of the Templars, Conrade of Montserrat, and the Moorish *hakim*, or physician, who is Saladin in disguise. *The Fair Maid of Perth* takes us back to Scotland in the reign of Robert III.; and the wretched fate of the dissolute Duke of Rothsay, son of that monarch, and the fierce combat between the rival Highland clans on the Inch of Perth, form the drama through whose incidents move the forms of Catharine Glover, Harry Gow, the smith of Perth, and Conachar, the constitutionally cowardly yet attractive young chieftain of the Clan Quhele.

12. **Novels of Continental Warfare.**—The second group consists of two Continental novels, the unhistorical characters in which are somewhat shadowy, and the episode of the false herald in one, and the melodramatic Vehmgericht of the other, have an imported air; but the young Scottish adventurer, Quentin Durward, and his uncle Le Balafre, have been prototypes of many successors in fiction, and the striking portrait of Louis XI. has given many a boy his first interest in French history. Whatever the defects of *Anne of Geierstein* and *Quentin Durward* may be, they are the true source of inspiration of many a novel of continental warfare of our own day.

13. **The Tudor Novels.**—The Tudor trilogy opens somewhat unsuccessfully with *The Monastery*. The supernatural machinery did not take the English taste, the White Lady of Avenel proving tedious and unconvincing; and the language of the Euphuist, Sir Piercie Shafton, was not relished by a public which had not penetrated the byways of Elizabethan literature. Its successor, *The Abbot*, was on all hands admitted to be a great improvement. No such picture of Mary Queen of Scots is to be found in prose fiction; and the rude and turbulent Scottish barons contrast vividly with the Queen's loyal attendant and friend, the high-born and attractive Catherine Seyton. But the novel which followed within four months has eclipsed both its predecessors; and *Kenilworth* still holds its place as one of the very finest historical romances in our

language. 'Tis true its author sacrifices historical truth in every item of the relations between Leicester and his hapless spouse, Amy Robsart. Leicester had been publicly wedded to her at Sheen, in presence of King Edward VI., on June 4th, 1550; her tragic death (or murder, if it were such) occurred ten years later, and the revels at Kenilworth took place in 1575. The book is indeed full of historical and literary inaccuracies and anachronisms, largely attributable to the speed with which it was written; but we would gladly accept a much more apocryphal chronicle as the price of another such tale.

14. **The Stuart Novels.**—The three novels of the Stuart period are less picturesque than those of the Tudor group. *The Fortunes of Nigel* enriches us with, *inter alia*, a strikingly realistic sketch of Alsatia and the portraits of the authentic George Heriot and the fictitious Richie Moniplies. *Woodstock*, inferior as a novel, possesses yet a touching interest in the resemblance between the fallen estate of the old cavalier knight, attended by his devoted daughter, and the ruined fortune of Sir Walter when he wrote it under pressure of the load of others' debts. Its pages are brightened by the sermon of the Independent, Tomkins, the dissipated swagger of Roger Wildrake, and the fidelity of Joceline Joliffe; and it is provided in Markham Everard with a hero of the usual wavering type, halting between two opinions. *Peveril of the Peak*, though it met, as Lockhart informs us, with "a reception somewhat colder than that of its immediate predecessors," introduces characters little less interesting than their forerunners. It is true that Fenella, the maiden who for years counterfeited the condition of a deaf mute, is unconvincing if not incredible, even when we are assured that her case was paralleled in the family of Scott's grandfather. The plot, too, is ill-conceived, and the catastrophe ill-contrived. But much may be forgiven in a novel which has enriched our literature with such portraits as those of the haughty French *châtelaine*, Charlotte de la Tremouille, Countess of Derby and Queen in Man; and of the fanatic Cromwellian, Major Bridgenorth; as well as those of the Duke of Buckingham, Chiffinch, and Colonel Blood.

15. **His Last Novels.**—*The Pirate* is founded on the doings of

"Captain" Gow, who about the middle of the eighteenth century harassed the coast of the Orkneys. It contains two of Scott's most attractive heroines, sprung of an old Norwegian stock—the sisters Minna and Brenda Troil. We have said that *St. Ronan's Well* is, with the exception of *Count Robert of Paris* and *Castle Dangerous*—both written with failing powers within two years of his death—the least successful of the novels. Perhaps the criticism of its author is the soundest that can be passed on it. "The Big Bow-Wow strain," he says, "I can do myself like any man going; but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the sentiments is denied me." In fact, the poet of *Marmion* was more at home on the battlefield of Flodden, the author of *Waverley* on the Highland heather, than amidst the gossip of provincial tea-tables.

Having thus briefly referred to the novels individually, it seems desirable to estimate the contribution made by Scott to the literature of poetry and prose fiction.

16. **His Poetry.**—The popularity of Byron, as we have already mentioned, soon depreciated Scott's poetry; and since then it has been the subject of much conflicting criticism. Perhaps the verdict which best summarises its permanent place in literature is that of Sir Leslie Stephen. "It is not," he says, "poetry of the first order. It is not poetry of deep meditation or of rapt enthusiasm, and yet it has . . . the charm of unaffected and spontaneous love of nature." "He stands," says Professor MacNeile Dixon, "as Homer stood, on the verge of an heroic age, looking back upon it, feeling its reality, and stirred to the innermost depths of his spirit by its own peculiar influences. Just as Homer was the last of the rhapsodists, the last as well as the greatest minstrel of the heroic age in Greece, Scott feigned himself, and was indeed, as he has been called, 'the last and greatest of the Border minstrels.'"

And in prose, to quote his most grudging admirer, Thomas Carlyle, "Since Shakespeare's time there has been no great speaker so unconscious of an aim in speaking as Sir Walter Scott." "Scott," says Sir Leslie Stephen again, "is one of the last great English writers whose influence extended beyond his island, and gave a stimulus to the development of European thought." And at home

he is the true parent of the modern novel of romance. From all the great writers of fiction the novelists of to-day seek to draw inspiration; but the era to which they belong dates from the appearance of *Waverley*. And no writer so voluminous can claim to be so wholesome, so clean-minded, none can show work which makes so wholly for goodness and truth. His dying words to his son-in-law, Lockhart, "My dear, be a good man—be virtuous—be religious—be a good man," may be taken as the simple motto of all he wrote. "If Scott," says Sir Leslie Stephen, "has contributed no great characters, like Hamlet, or Don Quixote, or Mephistopheles, to the world of fiction, he is the undisputed parent of a whole population full of enduring vitality." Chivalrous to women, he has given us a great galaxy of heroines: Di Vernon, Jeanie Deans, Lucy Ashton, Rebecca, Amy Robsart, and a host of others of all ages and all conditions. An aristocratic loyalist, he has painted for us that great gallery of royalties in which are to be found Richard Coeur de Lion and his brother John, Louis XI. and Charles the Bold, Robert III. of Scotland and James I. of England, Queen Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots, Oliver Cromwell, Charles II. and the ill-fated Charles Edward—the "Bonnie Prince Charlie" of Jacobite ballads. But it is not only "princes and counties," not only peasants and fishermen, who live for us in the pages of the *Waverley Novels*; the very horses and dogs have the reality and individuality of Don Quixote's Rosinante or Llewellyn's Gelert. From the steeds of Sir Kenneth and Saladin, in *The Talisman*, to Darsie Latimer's Roan Robin in *Redgauntlet*, what a cavalcade passes through his pages! And for dogs—are not Fangs in *Ivanhoe*, Roswal the staghound in *The Talisman*, and Bevis the wolfhound in *Woodstock*, as well known to us as their masters? Nay, are not even Dandie Dinmont's Mustard and Pepper still quoted by the dog-fancier? One must love dogs as Scott loved to make them live in literature as his have lived. And prone as was the age of *The Castle of Otranto* to the misuse of the supernatural, how modest is Scott in introducing it in his works! The Goblin Page and the White Lady of Avenel may amuse a sceptical age, but the astrology of *Guy Mannering*, the second sight of *The Legend of Montrose*, the weird invocations of Norna of the Fitful Head, the predictions of Meg Merrilies and



Madge Wildfire, have enchanted generations of readers. Surely it would be hard to exaggerate the indebtedness of our literature to Sir Walter Scott. As his latest panegyrist, Mr. John Hay from the great New England beyond the Atlantic, said at the unveiling of the bust in Westminster Abbey:—

Valour, purity, and loyalty—these are the essential and undying elements of the charm with which the great magician has soothed and lulled the weariness of the world through three tormented generations. For this he has received the uncritical, ungrudging love of grateful millions. . . . He loved, with a simple straightforward affection, man and nature, his country and his kind; he has his reward in a fame for ever fresh and unhackneyed. . . . His work is a clear, high voice from a simpler age than ours, breathing a song of lofty and unclouded purpose, of sincere and powerful passion, to which the world, however weary and preoccupied, must needs still listen and attend.

(i.) As a poet in the strict technical sense of the word, Scott evidently stands on a lower level than Byron, Wordsworth, and Shelley. His metrical romances, admirable as *tours de force*, and full of passages of effective rhetoric and striking description, do not compel the imagination to that complete "suspension of belief" which is the mark of the highest kind of poetry. The reason is obvious. . . . Prose alone could secure the large and unfettered liberty that historical romance requires: when Scott employs his magic powers to clothe the spirit of the Past in the language of real life the verisimilitude of his creation is complete.—WILLIAM J. COURTHOPE.

(ii.) Scott's poetry, though it yielded the field to Byron's versified tales, will never come to be classed with them. The interest of the latter depends upon the continual re-appearance of the personality of the author; it is not the broad human interest of *The Lady of the Lake* or *Marmion*. . . . Scott's lyrics are never expressive of the deeper or complex or spiritual emotion such as is rendered in Wordsworth's or Tennyson's; Shelley's rapt intensity mirrors a world to which he was an entire stranger. But critics of the newer school are not always alive to his supremacy in his own lyrical sphere.—PROFESSOR MACNEILE DIXON.

(iii.) A novelist, critic, historian, and poet, the favourite of his age, read over the whole of Europe, he was compared and almost equalled to Shakespeare, had more popularity than Voltaire, made dressmakers and duchesses weep, and earned about £200,000.—TAINÉ.

17. In striking contrast to the uneventful life of Sir Walter Scott is the "ravelled, hither and thither" career of John Galt (1779—1839). Born at Irvine, in Ayrshire, son of the master of a West Indiaman, he always displayed an adventurous spirit. At the age of ten he went to reside in Greenock, and is referred to by Carlyle as "a broad, gawsy<sup>1</sup> Greenock man." Like Scott, he

<sup>1</sup> jolly, gay (Scotch).

was fond of walking tours, on one of which he covered as much as twenty-five miles of ground before breakfast. In 1804 he went up to London, where he engaged unsuccessfully in business; and entered Lincoln's Inn with a view to being called to the Bar. Ill-health led him to start on a foreign tour, which was prolonged for three years, in the course of which he visited Gibraltar, Sardinia, Sicily, Malta, Greece, and Asia Minor. He conceived the project of conveying British goods from the Black Sea into Central Europe by land, so as to evade the Berlin and Milan decrees of Napoleon. At Gibraltar he had made the acquaintance of Byron, whom he again met at Athens. In 1811 he was back in London with a description of his journeying, poems, and translations, the result of his literary industry while abroad. During the next ten years he published not only these, but at least ten dramas, a novel, and other works; and for a short time edited *The Political Review*. In 1820 *The Ayrshire Legatees*, his first successful novel, appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*, and its success led to the rewriting and publishing of *The Annals of the Parish*, composed by him ten years previously and refused by Constable, the publisher, the firm which soon afterwards was to publish *Waverley*, on the grounds that a novel so entirely Scottish would not suit the public taste. These were followed by *Sir Andrew Wylie*, *The Entail*, *The Provost*, and *The Last of the Lairds*, and the less popular tale of *The Spaewife*, on the fascinating subject of the life of James I. of Scotland. The spirit of adventure was, however, not dead within him. He took a keen interest in the remaining British possessions in North America, was appointed Secretary of the Canada Company, and sent out by Government as a Commissioner of Valuation for the Province. His efforts at organisation were unsuccessful, and in the words of his autobiography, he "retired from the arena of business with the sullenness of a vanquished bull." In spite of failing health and paralytic attacks, he continued his literary activities, and was engaged on the proof-sheets of a volume of poems when he passed away at Greenock in his sixtieth year.

His novels, unlike his life, are barren of adventure and unfertile in incident, but reach a high level in delineation of character. He produces his effects by minute observation and

accumulation of homely details ; his best work is accomplished by the fine strokes of the literary etcher, and the quaint and petty household details of a Dutch painter. He has been very erroneously classed as an imitator of Scott ; but as we have seen, *The Annals of the Parish* had been written, and offered for publication, before the appearance of *Waverley*, and the work of Galt has few characteristics in common with that of Scott. In his own way he is to Scotland what Jane Austen is to England—a painter of domestic life.

18. **Minor Novelists.**—It would have seemed likely that the success of Beckford's wonderful romance should have produced numerous imitations. This, however, was not the case, as the requisite knowledge of Eastern life was then uncommon. Indeed, the only notable work which could claim even distant kinship with *Vathek* did not appear for thirty-seven years after the publication of the latter ; and may be regarded in every way as an independent effort. This is the novel *Hajji Baba of Ispahan* (1824) of **James Morier** (circa 1780—1849), an interesting experiment in acclimatising the picaresque novel to Eastern surroundings. The author, a member of the diplomatic service, had been for some years secretary to the English Embassy at the Court of Persia ; and the hero of the novel is a wandering barber and scribe, who, after many adventures, re-enters "his native place as Mirza Hajji Baba, the Shah's deputy." The intimate knowledge of Persian life possessed by its author renders the tale as interesting and lifelike as a record of real adventures. Another instance of transplanting the picaresque novel into a new atmosphere is to be found in the *Anastasius* (1819) of **Thomas Hope** (died 1831), which purports to be the autobiography of a renegade Greek, and does for the life of Turkey at the close of the eighteenth century what Morier's novel does for that of Persia. The author, eldest son of a wealthy merchant of Amsterdam, and a notable collector of marbles and vases, had the same intimate knowledge of the Levant which Morier had of the farther East.

The sisters **Jane Porter** (1776—1850) and **Anna Maria Porter** (1780—1832), who had known Sir Walter Scott in childhood, wrote several novels eagerly devoured by the female readers of

their day, and two of them—*Thaddeus of Warsaw* (1803) and *The Scottish Chiefs* (1810), both the work of the elder sister—are even now not entirely forgotten. These latter—the “beginning of the historical novel properly so called”—the earlier of which appeared two years before the date of even the first sketch of *Waverley*, may well have exercised the influence which its author claims for it, in turning Scott’s attention from poetry to romantic fiction. Miss Porter received from Kosciusko<sup>1</sup> “a medal with his portrait and a lock of his hair,” was created, as she tells us, a lady of the chapter of St. Joachim in Germany, and presented with the Gold Cross of the Order. By far the most voluminous writer of these minor novelists was **G. P. R. James** (1801—1860), who could boast of being the sole author of some two hundred volumes between the appearance of *Richelieu* (1829) and the date of his death. His puppets entirely lack the overflowing vitality of Scott’s characters, and we feel from the entrance of the two horsemen (who almost invariably appear in the first chapter of each novel) that we are dealing with automatons of the novelist and not with flesh and blood. These painstaking productions did not, however, lack readers, especially amongst schoolboys, till the multiplication of works of fiction of a higher order consigned them to oblivion. Their author also wrote a *History of Chivalry*, *Lives of Eminent Foreign Statesmen*, and numerous other historical works. He was appointed Historiographer Royal to William IV., and British Consul for Massachusetts in 1850, and Consul-General to Venice in 1856, in which city he died of apoplexy in 1860, and was buried in the Lido cemetery. James and his horsemen are now chiefly remembered by Thackeray’s parody of *Barbazure*, by *G. P. R. Jeames, Esquire*.

<sup>1</sup> Tadeusz Kosciusko (1746—1817) was a famous Polish patriot and general. He served with the Americans in the Revolution, and vainly strove to deliver Poland from the Russian yoke. Campbell in *The Pleasures of Hope* has the line:—

And Freedom shrieked, as Kosciusko fell.



## CHAPTER XXI

---

### THE LAKE SCHOOL OF POETRY: WORDSWORTH, COLERIDGE, SOUTHEY.

1. **The Lake School.**—We have noted the revulsion from the Classicism of the English Augustan age and the growth of the influence of Nature in poetry, and we have seen how large a part was played by Scottish writers in the inception and development of this movement. We have now to trace the rise of that school—thoroughly English, albeit northern English, in its origin—usually known as the “Lake School,” which may be said to dominate the poetry of the nineteenth century. The founders of this school (Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey), unlike many of their predecessors, attained a modest competence, and lived quiet and uneventful lives, exceeding the average term of human existence, and in startling contrast to the brief and meteoric careers of their great poetic contemporaries, Byron, Shelley, and Keats.

2. **William Wordsworth** (1770—1850), second son of a Cumberland attorney, was born at Cockermouth on April 7th, 1770. He lost his mother in his eighth and his father in his fourteenth year, after which he lived under the care of a paternal and a maternal uncle. He was educated at Hawkshead School, and by the generosity of his uncles was sent, in 1787, with his younger brother Christopher, to St. John's College, Cambridge. Whilst still an undergraduate, he spent one of the long vacations in a walking tour in Switzerland—a much more uncommon experience then than now, and this deepened that love of mountain scenery which he had conceived in his native Cumberland:—

But lovelier far than this, the paradise  
Where I was reared.

In *The Prelude* he thus refers to his Swiss tour:—

Day after day, up early and down late,  
From hill to vale we dropped, from vale to hill  
Mounted—from province on to province swept,  
Keen hunters in a chase of fourteen weeks,  
Eager as birds of prey, or as a ship  
Upon the stretch, when winds are blowing fair.

\* \* \* \* \*

The immeasurable height  
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,  
The stationary blasts of waterfalls  
And in the narrow rent at every turn  
Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn.

\* \* \* \* \*

The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens,  
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—  
Were all the workings of one mind, the features  
Of the same face.

In passing through France—then astir with the pulsing of the Revolution—he welcomed to the full those lofty hopes which then fluttered in the breasts of lovers of liberty and human brotherhood the wide world over:—

Bliss 'was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very heaven, oh, times  
In which the meagre stale forbidding ways  
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once  
The attraction of a country in romance.

In 1791 Wordsworth graduated, and, leaving Cambridge, came to reside in London—to him an alien city and one with whose life he was never in sympathy; indeed, in his great sonnet on *Westminster Bridge* it is only when

. . . the very houses seem asleep;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

that the great city seems to him

A sight so touching in its majesty.

Before the close of the year 1791 he crossed to France, proposing to winter in Orleans and learn the French language. He remained the following year in France, and still sympathised with the Revolution—a sympathy rudely shaken by the September massacres; and he would have remained still longer but that his relatives stopped his supplies, and thus necessitated his return to England.

3. **Life at Grasmere.**—The next six years of Wordsworth's life were spent rather aimlessly: the shattering of his faith in the French Revolution profoundly affected his whole mental attitude; and it was not till the close of 1799 that he settled at Grasmere, in the district where he was to spend the next fifty years. Wordsworth had not neglected to make trial of his poetic gifts: in 1793 he had published *Descriptive Sketches* and *The Evening Walk*, in which the influence of Goldsmith is noticeable, and in 1798 appeared the *Lyrical Ballads*, published by Joseph Cottle, of Bristol, which were the joint production of Wordsworth and his friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The greater part of the volume was contributed by the former, but the most important poem, *The Ancient Mariner*, was the work of Coleridge. But now a grand project was formed in the mind of Wordsworth—namely, that of a great poem to be entitled *The Recluse*, intended to deal with the growth and development of the poet's mind. The first part, described by its author on its completion as a sort of "portico" to *The Recluse*, and afterwards named *The Prelude*, was not finished till 1805, and remained unpublished at the time of his death. The second division of the poem consists of *The Excursion*; and though other portions were composed, they remained fragmentary, and were either left unpublished or "incorporated," we are told, "in the author's other publications."

In 1802 Wordsworth married, and was fortunate in securing a helpmate in full sympathy with his aims and mode of life, as had been his sister Dorothy, hitherto his companion and housekeeper, who continued to reside with him after his marriage in an unbrokenly harmonious household. They led an almost solitary existence, disturbed only from time to time by visits of friends, and occupied themselves in reading, gardening, and in walks through the beautiful scenery of the district, for which Wordsworth has done what Scott accomplished for the Scottish Highlands. Family griefs indeed he experienced: the drowning of his brother John, who went down, with the vessel which he commanded, off Portland Bill, in the same year as saw Nelson's victory and death at Trafalgar; the loss of two of his children in 1812; and the death of his married daughter in 1847; but otherwise his life was peaceful, uneventful,

and supremely happy. He wrote and published from time to time poems which fell unresponsive on ears filled with the trumpet-notes of Byron and of Scott: his *Happy Warrior* (1805), his *Sonnets to Liberty* (1802—1816), and finally *The Excursion* (1814). In 1815 he published, in two volumes, the first complete collected edition of his works, now arranged under headings such as, Poems referring to the Period of Childhood, Juvenile Pieces, Poems founded on the Affections, etc.; and in the same year appeared *The White Doe of Rylstone*.

In 1813 Wordsworth had obtained from Lord Lonsdale the post of distributor of stamps for the county of Westmorland, and was thus enabled to remove to Rydal Mount, and to pursue the even tenor of his way, free from pecuniary anxieties. He enjoyed the companionship of many sympathetic friends. Southey resided at Keswick, De Quincey in Wordsworth's old cottage at Grasmere, Coleridge was a frequent guest, Scott visited him in 1805, as did Emerson in 1833, and Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, built, in 1832, a house on Fox How for his own occupation. The series of *Sonnets on the River Duddon* appeared in 1820, and, with *The Waggoner*, the *Thanksgiving Ode*, and *Peter Bell*, formed the third volume of his *Miscellaneous Poems*. It is interesting in this connection to note that five hundred copies of *The Excursion* had supplied the public demand for six years after its appearance. *Yarrow Revisited* was published in 1835, and a final collected edition in six volumes appeared in 1836—1837. *The Prelude*, as we have said, was posthumously published in 1850.

In 1831 Wordsworth and his daughter had paid a farewell visit to Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford, immediately before he started on the voyage from which he was to return only to die at home. In 1842 Wordsworth received from Sir Robert Peel an annuity of £300 on the Civil List, and the year following, on the death of Southey, he was appointed Poet Laureate. In 1845 he was presented to Queen Victoria, and two years later the death of his married daughter, already referred to, left him for the three remaining years of his life to mourn his "immeasurable loss." On April 23rd, 1850, the anniversary alike of the birth and death of Shakespeare, the great Laureate passed



away, leaving to no unworthy successor, in the person of the late Lord Tennyson,

This laurel greener from the brows  
Of him that uttered nothing base.

4. **His Work.**—No poet ever approached his task with higher ideals or more clearly thought-out aims than did Wordsworth. "What, then, does the poet?" he asks:—

He considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and reacting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure. . . . The man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the poet singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion.

This leads us naturally to consider the subjects and style of expression which Wordsworth deliberately set before himself as his ideal in poetry, and to inquire how far this ideal was attained by him, and how far it was attainable.

His object (he says) was to choose incidents and situations from common life and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect.

In the first of these objects he had been to some extent anticipated by Cowper and by Crabbe; but neither of these had successfully shaken off the artificial diction which was then considered a necessary equipment of a poet, and from which his own early volume of *Descriptive Sketches* (1793) is by no means free; nor did either of them possess that sense of the mysteries of Nature, that sympathetic philosophy of the commonplace, which lay at the base of Wordsworth's wonderful power.

Burns had, indeed, by his use of the Scottish dialect, freed himself from the trammels of the conventional language of English poetry; but it was as dialect poems alone that his lyrics had gained acceptance. It is not too much to say, with Mr. John Morley:—

Wordsworth effected a wholesome deliverance when he attacked the artificial diction, the personifications, the allegories, the antitheses, the barren rhymes, and monotonous metres which the reigning taste had approved. The conventions have gone or are changed, and we are all glad of it.

But Wordsworth proceeded further in his projects of reform :—

Humble and rustic life (he says) was generally chosen, because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language. . . . The language, too, of these men has been adopted, . . . because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived.

Or, as he puts it in the original preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, he wished to "ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure." That the language of the average peasant is the best and most fitting medium for poetic expression is a contention with which few would agree; and though Wordsworth doubtless honestly strove to carry his theories into practice, they often landed him in phrases of commonplace absurdity, and we must regard him as most successful when he unconsciously departed from them. Such lines as—

A little child, dear brother Jim—

which he was with difficulty persuaded to alter; such an incident as the sailing of the blind Highland boy upon the loch in

A household tub, like one of those  
Which women use to wash their clothes,

which he unwillingly changed for a more conventional turtle-shell which did duty for a coracle; or the apotheosis of commonplace which he reaches in these lines from *The Idiot Boy*—

And Betty's most especial charge  
Was, "Johnny! Johnny! mind that you  
Come home again, nor stop at all,—  
Come home again, whate'er befall,  
My Johnny, do, I pray you do"—

should have convinced him of the dangers of pushing theories too far. On the other hand, he widely departed from them, as in the following sonnet :—

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon ;  
 The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
 And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers ;  
 For this, for everything, we are out of tune ;  
 It moves us not.—Great God ! I'd rather be  
 A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn ;  
 So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
 Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn ;  
 Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea ;  
 Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

And, again, in this verse from the poem commencing "Three years she grew in sun and shower":—

The stars of midnight shall be dear  
 To her ; and she shall lean her ear  
 In many a secret place  
 Where rivulets dance their wayward round,  
 And beauty born of murmuring sound  
 Shall pass into her face.

In these neither the subject nor the language would be intelligible to the Cumberland dalesman, yet here we see the poet at his best. But his theories were not therefore fruitless. His object in the *Lyrical Ballads* is, indeed, better expressed by Coleridge in the *Biographia Literaria*:—

Mr. Wordsworth was to propose to himself as his object to give the charm of novelty to the things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural by awakening the mind's attention to the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and wonders of the world before us.

He regarded it as his mission to show how much good, how much interest, and how much true wealth there is in the ordinary round of life open to all of us, all of which, however, is unfelt by most, owing to the "lethargy of custom." The common life of common men—that is lofty enough for him. The association of the human mind, its moods and longings, with the simple natural objects of every-day life—the dancing, fluttering daffodils, that

Flash upon that inward eye  
 Which is the bliss of solitude ;

the cry of "the cuckoo-bird"—

Breaking the silence of the seas  
 Among the farthest Hebrides ;

or the great voiceless influence of his native mountainland—

The silence that is in the starry sky ;  
The sleep that is among the lonely hills :

in these the poet finds his true vocation, and adds to the sum of happiness of all thinking, feeling humanity :—

Long have I loved what I behold—  
The night that calms, the day that cheers ;  
The common growth of Mother Earth  
Suffices me, her tears, her mirth,  
Her humblest mirth and tears.  
The dragon's wing, the magic ring  
I shall not covet for my dower,  
If I along that lowly way  
With sympathetic heart may stray,  
And with a soul of power.

With these great and commanding merits, what, we may ask, were the limitations of Wordsworth? These are mainly to be found in his lack of humour and his occasional diffuseness. It is noticeable that such general popularity as Wordsworth possesses rests mainly on his *Sonnets*. The "Sonnet's scanty plot of ground" afforded no room for discursiveness; and those who in the long-winded *Excursion* have "felt the weight of too much liberty" welcome the limitations within which the poet is forced to concentrate his thought. "His imperfections, the mixture of prose with his poetry," admitted by so partial a critic as Matthew Arnold, burden his longer poems with passages which read like extracts from lectures on moral philosophy. His want of humour again disfigures his poems with trivial images and phrases such as those already quoted. "He had," says James Russell Lowell, "no humour, no dramatic power, and his temperament was of that dry and juiceless quality, that in all his published correspondence you shall not find a letter, but only essays."

5. **Wordsworth as a Religious Teacher.**—Much of the influence which the poet has exercised on the best thought of the nineteenth century is due to his unique position as a guide in religious thought. Such was his abiding love of Nature and his reverence for Man, that in all his best work he links them together as acting and



reacting on each other : man seeing in even inanimate Nature a living sympathy with his varying moods ; and Nature bringing to man solace in bereavement or loneliness, gladness in successful achievement, and at all times an influence to elevate his thoughts above the sordid and temporary to the unseen and eternal. Thus a kind of Christian pantheism may be evolved from his writings. Indeed, even the crude Nature-worship of classical mythology appeals vividly to him, as in the sonnet already quoted, ending with the half-implicit longing to

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

Unlike Cowper, Wordsworth does not insist on the teachings of Nature as pointing to the imminent care and goodness of a personal Deity. "How," exclaims Bishop Westcott, "could Wordsworth—the English Goethe—how could he write so much without the impress of Christianity?" Without the impress of dogmatic Christianity it may be ; but we cannot regard the natural religion of Wordsworth as in any true sense non-Christian. He will not make his brook "a Naiad" ; rather to him—

It seems the Eternal soul is clothed in thee  
With purer robes than those of flesh and blood.

In the great ode on *The Intimations of Immortality*, he elevates the Platonic philosophy, by elaborating the remembrance of the impressions of childhood into that claim for the soul of the child of a pre-natal existence, as a foretaste and pledge of a future immortality, which he clothes in the magnificent and well-known lines :—

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar :  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home.

Well does Mrs. Oliphant characterise this ode as "this divinest utterance of modern poetry. . . . Never was there so wonderful

a picture drawn all in lines of light: and never were thoughts so profound and revealed in a more limpid strain of perfect poetry."

(i) "Wordsworth . . . by his secret of bringing the infinite into common life, as he evokes it out of common life, has the skill to lead us, so long as we yield ourselves to his influence, into inner moods of settled peace, to touch 'the depth and not the tumult of the soul,' to give us quietness, strength, steadfastness, and purpose, whether to do or to endure. All art or poetry that has the effect of breathing into men's hearts, even if it be only for a space, these moods of settled peace, and strongly confirming their judgment and their will for good,—whatever limitations may be found besides, however prosaic may be some or much of the detail,—is great art and noble poetry, and the creator of it will always hold, as Wordsworth holds, a sovereign title to the reverence and gratitude of mankind."—JOHN MORLEY.

(ii) "Unlike Milton or Goethe or Tennyson, Wordsworth was not a conscious artist, or more truly, perhaps, he was greatest when he was least conscious of how his effects were attained. . . . Throughout his poetry, his unswerving loyalty to whatsoever things are just and lovely, and of good report, gives us fresh confidence in life. No poet has shown so triumphantly how strong in its barest simplicity may be that poetry, whose theme is

'No other than the very heart of man.'"

—PROFESSOR MACNEILE DIXON.

**6. Samuel Taylor Coleridge** (1772—1834), born October 21st, 1772, was the youngest son of the Vicar of Ottery St. Mary, in Devonshire, who was also head-master of the grammar school in that place. Few men have exerted so great an influence on others, and accomplished so little themselves, as this most unpractical of the "worthies" of Devon. He had the misfortune to lose his father while still in his ninth year, and before he was ten years of age he was presented to a free scholarship in Christ's Hospital, London. He was a strange child—soon well versed on the less known classic authors, and early addicted to "metaphysics and theological controversy": so that before he had attained his fifteenth year he delighted to enter into conversation with passing strangers on the deepest philosophical problems; and, according to his friend and schoolfellow, Charles Lamb, to unfold in his "deep and sweet intonations the mysteries of Iamblichus<sup>1</sup> or Plotinus,"<sup>2</sup> and to recite "Homer in the Greek or Pindar," while

<sup>1</sup> A Syrian Neo-Platonic philosopher who died about 330 A.D.

<sup>2</sup> Plotinus (204—270) was the most celebrated of the Neo-Platonists. He taught that the higher the soul rises in the sphere of intellect, the deeper it sinks in the ocean of the good and the pure, until at last its union with God is complete.

the walls of the old Grey Friars re-echoed with the accents of "the inspired charity-boy."

In after life Coleridge often alluded to the misery of his school-days, doubtless with much unconscious exaggeration, as may be inferred from the fact that a chief cause of wretchedness was the recurrence of single holidays. On such days absence from the school was enforced on the pupils, and they were often spent by the sensitive, friendless lad in aimless wanderings in the neighbourhood of the school, until its gates should again be thrown open to him. In February, 1791, he was sent up from Christ's Hospital to Jesus College, Cambridge, where, though he obtained a gold medal for a Greek ode, his reading was, in the words of a class-fellow, "desultory and capricious"—words, indeed, fitted to describe all his future efforts. At the end of 1793 he suddenly left Cambridge, and enlisted in a dragoon regiment, under the name of Silas Tomkyns Comberbatch. His military career lasted, however, but a few months, for his friends, on learning of his whereabouts, procured his discharge, and Coleridge returned to Cambridge. On a visit to an old schoolfellow at Oxford early in 1794, he met Southey, and a warm friendship ensued. The same summer they met again at Bristol, and here made the acquaintance of Joseph Cottle, their future publisher, and of the family of young ladies, the Misses Fricker, to two of whom they were soon afterwards respectively married. And now was formed that strangest of all strange projects ever conceived by intelligent men—the scheme of Pantisocracy (equal government of all), the "grand scheme" which, as Southey writes, "flashed upon our minds, and now all is perfectly delightful." The wild plan of these dreamers was to emigrate to America, and to settle far from civilisation and its consequent evils of laws and taxes. A community of goods was also a fundamental condition of this wild system of colonisation. Full of his new hopes for the regeneration of society, Coleridge went up to London, and obtained more recruits. He incidentally lighted on a "most intelligent young man" who had spent five years in America, and who suggested the Susquehanna as a district favourable for the projected settlement, and hinted that a capital of £2,000 might afford the new colony a fair start. The only funds available

were £6, which a London publisher had offered for a volume of poetry; but Cottle, of Bristol, advanced £30 on a similar security, and even paid the money down. Coleridge immediately pushed on his marriage, which took place in St. Mary Redcliffe (the church of poor Chatterton's forgeries) on October 4th, 1795, Southey's being celebrated the following month. But marriage had a sobering effect at least on Southey, who had accepted the offer of a trip to Lisbon; another of the adventurers died, and the remainder, to the number of a score, returned to their respective avocations.

Thus ended this notable project, leaving Coleridge at the age of twenty-three in a one-storey cottage at Clevedon, with a young wife and the prospectus of a new weekly journal, *The Watchman*. Ten numbers saw the decease of Coleridge's journal; but his first volume of poems was published in 1796, and the same year appeared his *Ode to the Departing Year*. Coleridge now moved to Nether Stowey, in Somersetshire, and another inmate was found for their household in the person of Charles Lloyd, son of a Birmingham banker, who had been impressed by the singular conversational abilities of the poet.

7. **Lyrical Ballads.**—We now reach the turning-point in Coleridge's life—his meeting with Wordsworth. The two men who were to exert so profound an influence on each other, and indeed on the whole course of nineteenth-century literature, met first in Bristol, and then at Racedown, in Dorsetshire, where Wordsworth then resided with his sister, and where he was visited by Coleridge. Each of them was then engaged on a tragedy, and so great was the mutual attraction that Wordsworth quitted his residence, and took up his abode at Alfoxden, to be near Coleridge at Nether Stowey. In their rambles on the Quantock Hills the main lines of a joint volume of poems were debated and agreed on, Coleridge undertaking a class of poems in which "the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural," yet so composed "as to transfer from our outward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of the imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith"; Wordsworth making himself responsible for poems whose "subjects were to be chosen from



ordinary life." The outcome was the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), to which Coleridge contributed *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, a poem which had been discussed, and in part composed, during these wanderings, and which in execution, though not in poetic significance, may be taken to outweigh the larger body of Wordsworth's work. To this poem the latter had contributed the ideas of the slaying of the albatross and the navigation of the vessel by the dead crew, and two fine lines:—

And thou art long and lank and brown  
As is the ribbed sea sand.

But the weird realism of the poem is the great gift of Coleridge—a gift unsurpassed in the works of any poet, ancient or modern. This strain was undoubtedly stimulated by companionship and converse with Wordsworth, and it is to the brief period of this intercourse that most of Coleridge's original poetic efforts are referable. He completed his tragedy *Osorio*, and wrote *Love, The Dark Ladie*, the first part of the fragmentary *Christabel*, *Fears in Solitude*, and *France: An Ode*, described by Shelley as "the finest ode in the English language," and that striking fragment *Kubla Khan*, which Mr. Swinburne suggests is "perhaps the most wonderful of all poems."

Coleridge now accepted the pulpit of an Unitarian chapel at Shrewsbury; but the offer of the Wedgewood brothers of a pension of £150 per annum, to enable him to devote himself to poetry, decided him to relinquish the cure of souls, and he started in September, 1798, with Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy, for Germany. Coleridge soon parted from the Wordsworths, attended lectures at Göttingen, and walked through the Hartz Mountains. On returning to England, he translated Schiller's *Wallenstein*. He also took charge of the literary portion of *The Morning Post*, and even rejected an offer of a half share in that paper; and in the summer of 1800 went to reside near the Wordsworths at Greta Hall, Keswick. Here he seems to have given himself up to the fatal influence of opium, first taken by him to soothe those rheumatic pains from which he was often a sufferer, but soon to become a tyrant necessity to which he alludes as "the fatal whirlpool to which I was drawing, just when the current was beyond my strength

to stem." It was under the growing slavery of the opium habit that he wrote, in 1802, *Dejection*, a gloomy poem in which he describes himself as suffering

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,  
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,  
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,  
In word, or sigh, or tear.

In 1804 ill-health, almost continuous, induced him to try a voyage to Malta, the funds for which were supplied by Wordsworth. Here he acted for a time as secretary to the governor; but, finding his health did not improve, he returned to England in 1806, by way of Sicily, Naples, and Rome. He had by this time, through ill-health and opium, reached such a state of inertia and procrastination that, on learning of the death of one of his patrons, the Wedgewoods, he delayed for nearly twelve months before writing to the surviving brother. In this letter he says: "In all things that affect my moral feelings I have sunk under such a strange cowardice of pain that I have not unfrequently kept letters, from persons dear to me, for weeks together unopened." In 1808 Coleridge came up to London from Keswick to deliver a series of lectures on poetry and the fine arts. These met with small success, owing to carelessness and unpunctuality, the outcome of his wretched physical and mental state; and he took up his abode with Wordsworth in his new house at Allan Bank, near Grasmere, and launched a new literary venture, *The Friend*, a weekly journal, which was started on the most unbusinesslike lines, and of which only twenty-eight numbers appeared.

In 1810 he again came to London, recommenced journalistic work, and delivered those lectures on Shakespeare and Milton which, in the irritatingly fragmentary and discursive condition in which they have come down to us, are still among the most suggestive and informing criticisms to be found in our language. From this time Coleridge, for six years, sank lower and lower in power of will and mental capacity, until he fortunately adopted the heroic remedy of placing himself under the absolute control of a kindly physician in Highgate, with whom he spent the last sixteen years of his life, whose gloom steadily lessened as

self-control gradually brought returning brightness. Though the creative faculty never was recovered, his great mental powers resumed some of their former activity in the direction of critical and philosophic prose, of which the *Biographia Literaria* is the highest product. "Coleridge sat on the brow of Highgate Hill in those years," says Carlyle, "looking down on London and its smoke tumult like a sage escaped from the inanity of life's battle, attracting towards him the thoughts of innumerable brave souls still engaged there."

On July 25th, 1834, Coleridge reached that final rest for which he had often longed, and was laid in Highgate churchyard. His obituary in *Blackwood's Magazine*, more appreciative than any utterance while he lived, stated of him: "Coleridge alone perhaps of all men that ever lived was always a poet—in all his moods, and they were many, inspired."

8. **His Work.**—In estimating the work of Coleridge, consisting as it does rather of tantalising fragments than of finished performance, we are struck at once by its high quality and by its astonishing variety. In him we have combined the open-eyed poet, the sympathetic translator of the poetry of others, the author of a successful drama, the inspired literary critic, and the philosophic thinker; and under each of these heads he demands an estimate.

The creative period of the genius of Coleridge was, as we have seen, practically limited to a year or two, when, in the fulness of his imaginative powers, and in daily intercourse with Wordsworth, he alike conferred and received that divine afflatus to which we owe the *Lyrical Ballads*. We have in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* one of the greatest imaginative creations in any language. From the words—

"There was a ship," quoth he—

until—

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship  
The boat spun round and round,—

we listen spellbound to the weird tale; like the wedding guest,  
we too

Cannot choose but hear.

And in its execution, the storm-blast striking "with his o'ertaking wings," the "ice, mast-high," the becalmed vessel—

As idle as a painted ship  
Upon a painted ocean,—

the rotting deep with its water-snakes, "blue, glossy green, and velvet black," the "ghastly crew" of "four times fifty" corpses, and the magnificent picture of a tropical sunset—

The Sun's rim dips ; the stars rush out :  
At one stride comes the dark,—

are all skilfully subordinated to the human interest in the doomed mariner. In all this, we have at once a creator and an artist in words, such as had hardly been known to English literature since Shakespeare died. To the same creative period belongs much of the fragmentary *Christabel*, with its strange shadowings of an unexplained mystery of evil warring against innocence—a fragment indeed, but probably one that exemplifies the truth that the part is sometimes greater than the whole. To these may be added *Kubla Khan*, that "Vision in a Dream," as its author terms it, with its haunting harmonies of phrase and rime, and the *Odes to France* and *To the Departing Year*—no great work as to quantity, but all in the first rank as to quality.

The translation of Schiller's drama *Wallenstein*, published by Messrs. Longmans in 1800, was a complete financial failure. German literature had not then found a reading public in England, and the publishers disposed of the unsold copies as waste paper. Sixteen years later copies fetched double their original price. An interesting measure of the value of the translation is afforded in the fact that one of the best passages in Coleridge's version had been interpolated by him; and this passage was actually re-translated by Schiller and incorporated by him in the German edition.

Coleridge's one completed drama, commenced before his meeting with Wordsworth in 1797, and then named *Osorio*, received not even an acknowledgment from Sheridan when sent to him by its author for his approval, but fifteen years later the piece was rechristened *Remorse*, and having been recommended by



Byron to the management, it was successfully produced in Drury Lane Theatre, earning for its author "more than all my literary labours put together—nay, thrice as much."

Though Coleridge's work as a journalist and critic was varied and important, it will be by his *Biographia Literaria* and by his *Lectures on Shakespeare* that he will always be best known in the latter capacity. In the former we have the most illuminating criticism of Wordsworth's poetry and poetic methods that has ever been written. The *Lectures on Shakespeare* were irregularly delivered to small and sometimes unappreciative audiences in London and Bristol. For much of what we possess of them we are indebted to press notices, extracts from the diary of Henry Crabb Robinson, and transcripts of the shorthand notes of Payne Collier. No more informing or suggestive criticisms have ever appeared on the genius of Shakespeare. The flashes of insight, the analyses of the characters, the acute textual criticism give ground for regret that these lectures have only reached us in so imperfect a fashion.

We have to look for the last stage of Coleridge's literary activity to that Indian summer of his declining years when he had succeeded in mastering his besetting weakness, and had attained high repute amongst a circle of friends and admirers as a metaphysician and theologian. Vast projects still loomed dimly in that busy brain. He speaks of critical works, "virtually completed," to fill three volumes of five hundred pages each, and of a History of Philosophy which was "to effect a revolution in all that has been called Philosophy and Metaphysics in England and France since the era of commencing predominance of the mechanical system at the Restoration of our second Charles." These, however, like most of Coleridge's work, remained in a state of chaotic incompleteness, and, save the work published by his "friend and enlightened pupil, Mr. Green," we have only the *Aids to Reflection*, a book which has had many readers on both sides of the Atlantic, but which adds little to the literary reputation of its author.

"Coleridge is, in fact, the great musician of the romantic school of English poetry. His practice is the exact antithesis of Wordsworth's theory that

there is no essential difference between the language of poetry and the language of prose. In him metrical movement is all in all. He was the first to depart from the lofty severe iambic movement which had satisfied the feeling of the eighteenth century, and, by associating picturesque images and antique phrases in melodious and flowing metres, to set the imagination free in a world quite removed from actual experience."—W. J. COURTHOPE.

9. **Robert Southey** (1774—1843).—Last of the friendly trio, whose residence in the Lake country gave its name to the Lake School, was Robert Southey, whose poetry, the work of his youth, now deservedly counts for little in comparison with his prose, the product of his maturer years—a prose which still holds an honourable place amongst English classics. Robert Southey was born in 1774, the eldest surviving son of a linen draper in Bristol, but was brought up as a child by his mother's half-sister, a maiden lady resident in Bath. He was early taken to the theatre, and acquired a taste for dramatic authors in his childhood. After a wandering and unsatisfactory experience of country schools, varied by much self-education in translation of the Italian epics, and by readings in Spenser, Sidney, and miscellaneous literature, Southey was sent at the age of fourteen to Westminster School, whence, four years later, he was expelled for an essay in a school paper against flogging. After a short stay with his aunt at Bristol, he was entered at Balliol College, Oxford. Here he declares "all I learnt was a little swimming . . . and a little boating"; but in Oxford he completed in six weeks the draft of his first published poem, *Joan of Arc*, an epic in twelve books. He was at this time an ardent upholder of the French Revolutionaries, but the fall of the Girondins<sup>1</sup> and the guillotining in 1793 of Brissot,<sup>2</sup> his ideal leader, largely alienated his sympathies.

At Oxford in 1794 Southey met Coleridge, then fresh from his brief career in the 15th Light Dragoons, and the latter soon confided to his new friend the wild scheme of Pantisocracy already referred to in the life of Coleridge. In return, as a wife seems to have been considered a necessary part of the equipment, Southey intro-

<sup>1</sup> The Girondist party was so called from the French department of the Gironde, from whence its original leaders came. They were moderate Republicans, and were the ruling party till 1793, when they were overthrown by the more violent Revolutionists.

<sup>2</sup> A prominent Girondist leader.

duced Coleridge, with a view to matrimony, to a sister of Edith Fricker, whom he had selected as his own future spouse. Towards the close of 1795 the two marriages were celebrated; but, as we know, want of funds proved fatal to the projected settlement on the banks of the Susquehanna, and Southey, now alienated from his aunt, started on his wedding day with an uncle for Lisbon, leaving his wife to the care of her family, and the revised manuscript of *Joan of Arc* in the hands of his sympathetic friend, Joseph Cottle, for publication. The following year he returned to Bristol, and saw the appearance of his epic in a handsome quarto, which met with more success than it would now probably be held to have deserved. After some spasmodic attempts in London at the study of the law, interspersed with journalistic work and much verse-making, he settled, first at Westbury, near Bristol, then at Burton, in Hampshire, and pushed on the completion of those ambitious poems which had long held a foremost place in his imagination. Fortunately for his future fame, his visit to Lisbon had induced him to contemplate another work, the *History of Portugal*, which, though but half finished at his death, forty years later, may be regarded as the commencement of Southey's prose. A nervous fever, the result mainly of overwork, decided his friends on sending him once more, and this time with his wife to accompany him, to the neighbourhood of his uncle's home near Lisbon. Here he finished his second long poem, *Thalaba*, and commenced another, *The Curse of Kehama*. On his return the following year, he received a letter from Coleridge, who had just taken Greta Hall, Keswick, proposing that they should occupy it jointly; he consented, and thus began Southey's connection with the Lakes. At Greta Hall he left his wife while he held for a short time the post of private secretary to the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer; and here, on the death of their only child, he settled in 1803, in what was to be his home till that rough March morning forty years later, when he was laid to rest in the neighbouring churchyard. The most notable event in this uneventful period of forty years was the conferring on him by the Prince Regent of the Laureateship, on the death of Pye in 1813.

Amid beautiful surroundings of mountain and lake, valley and waterfall, Southey spent his peaceful, useful, and industrious life, toiling steadily at literature, surrounded by friends and visited by admiring strangers. With him his sisters-in-law—the widow of his friend Lovell and the wife of Coleridge—found a home, and their children shared with his own his parental care and solicitude. Three daughters grew up to replace his lost first-born, and for many years perhaps no man tasted purer or more unalloyed happiness than did this typical man of letters. "What makes the life of Southey eminent and singular," says Professor Dowden, "is its unity of purpose, its persistent devotion to a chosen object; its simplicity, purity, loyalty, fortitude, kindness, truth." His one passion was for books, and his library steadily grew from four thousand to fourteen thousand volumes. Amid these he toiled, and volume after volume appeared from his busy pen. *Madoc* (1805) and *Kehama* (1810) duly followed *Thalaba* in publication, but brought their author neither fame nor more substantial rewards.

The starting of *The Quarterly Review* by John Murray in 1809 afforded him congenial occupation as a reviewer. *Roderick, the Last of the Goths*, was published in 1814, and the ill-starred *Vision of Judgment* may be said to have closed Southey's poetical career in 1821. His best-known prose work, *The Life of Nelson*, appeared in 1813, and was followed by *The Life of Wesley*, *The History of the Peninsular War*, *The Book of the Church*, and *Sir Thomas More; or, Colloquies on Society*. His last work of any importance is that extraordinary specimen of a commonplace book, whose humour is more ponderous than that of the "great lexicographer," and which was published under the title of *The Doctor*. Crushed by the loss of an only and beloved son, and by the lunacy and quickly following death of her who had been his helpmate for forty years, Southey spent the last four years of his life in a species of growing torpor, ending in semi-unconsciousness, from which melancholy condition a short attack of fever mercifully released him. He died on March 21st, 1843.

10. **His Work.**—We have already referred to the tireless literary activity of Robert Southey. One hundred and nine published



volumes and one hundred and fifty articles in reviews attest his industry and versatility. In his longer poems he is well described by Professor Dowden as a "Finder" rather than a "Maker." His translations of the mediæval romances, *Amadis of Gaul*, *Palmerin of England*, and his admirable version of *The Chronicle of the Cid* may be looked on as an introduction to his prose work. It is to be regretted that he failed to complete what would have been a truly monumental work in his *History of Portugal*. The *History of Brazil*, which is in some sense a portion of the greater work, fails to reach any high level of interest. But his best-known and also his best prose work is *The Life of Nelson*, which will always remain a classic, and doubtless long continue a favourite. In it Southey's prose attains a high standard of excellence. The limpid purity of his style, the simple directness with which he keeps before his readers the figure of his hero, completely fulfil the ideal which its author had set before him of a biography, "clear and concise enough to become a manual for the young sailor, which he may carry about with him till he has treasured up the example in his memory and heart."

(i) In the year 1830 Macaulay expressed the doubt whether "fifty years hence Mr. Southey's poems will be read." The prophecy was well grounded, for Southey, as a poet, was not popular in his own day, nor is he in this.

(ii) "I have done enough (said Southey of himself) to be remembered among poets, though my proper place will be among the historians."

(iii) "Southey is at his best in prose. . . . There is no style fitter for continuous narrative than the pedestrian style of Southey. It does not beat upon the ear with hard metallic vibration. . . . He affects neither the trick of stateliness nor that of careless ease; he does not seek out curiosities of refinement, nor caress delicate affectations. Because his style is natural it is inimitable; and the only way to write like Southey is to write well."—  
PROFESSOR DOWDEN.

## CHAPTER XXII.

---

### BYRON, SHELLEY, AND KEATS.

1. **The Romantic Movement.**—As we have seen, the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries witnessed the birth and development of the Romantic Movement—the rise of new influences, new ideas, and new life in society. The coming up of a high flood-tide of new forces seems to have coincided with the beginning of the French Revolution, which caused the downfall of ancient institutions, more or less mediaeval, and announced to the Old World and the New that the old *régime* was dead. How Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey were influenced by the dawn of the new day we have already noticed. These new ideas of freedom and equality, of respect for man as man, which were thrown into popular form in France, became living forces throughout Europe, and in England animated and inspired, among other best minds of the times, Burns, Byron, and Shelley. But it was not alone in poetry that this great influence was felt; for with the rush of hope and emotion then experienced, there was an outburst of talent and genius in every kind of human endeavour that has had no parallel in England since the Elizabethan period. In literature, as it has well been said, there was recovered “the Elizabethan magic and passion, a more than Elizabethan sense of beauty and complexity of nature, the Elizabethan music of language.” Of the poets who were profoundly influenced by the new ideas, Byron and Shelley took up the most uncompromising attitude, and became the embodiment of the spirit of poetry in revolt.

2. **George Gordon, Lord Byron** (1788—1824), was the son of

John Byron, nephew of the fifth Lord Byron, and Catherine Gordon of Gight, a descendant of the Gordons of Huntly. The father was a disreputable man, and squandered his wife's property; after a separation Mrs. Byron went to live in Aberdeen with her child, who at the age of ten succeeded his grand-uncle in 1798 as sixth Lord Byron, and inherited the property of Newstead in Nottinghamshire. The young peer had a desultory education until he was about thirteen, when he went to Harrow, and here he remained four years. In 1805 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where he graduated after a three years' attendance of great irregularity, and marked also by a conspicuous want of effort. He never attained to scholarship, but he read widely in general literature from childhood up, and had a very solid foundation of learning when he launched into poetry.

From his infancy Byron was the victim of excessive sensibility and morbid self-consciousness, partly due to natural delicacy of constitution; but beyond all doubt these failings were intensified by the treatment of his mother, a woman of an excitable and highly strung nervous temperament, who alternately scolded, petted, and spoilt the impressionable child. He was lame (by an accident), and his mother's ungenerous—in fact, cruel—reflections on his deformity poisoned the boy's mind, and caused him to attach an undue importance to this physical defect, and thus stimulated the growth of vanity and egotism in a nature already too prone to their development. An incident that occurred while at Harrow gave an unhealthy impetus to those morbid feelings, which were his companions through life. He conceived an intense passion for Mary Ann Chaworth, heiress to the estates adjoining Newstead, who was several years older than himself. The sentiment was not reciprocal, and he received a shock to his pride and passion by a heartless reflection on his deformity, when he overheard the lady saying to her maid, "Do you think I could care for that lame boy?" Stung to the quick, he quitted her house and fled to Newstead. He frequently refers to this more than boyish passion in after years, and in 1807 he wrote the lines to her beginning—

Oh! had my fate been joined with thine.

And nine years later, in *The Dream*, he sees the vision of "her who was his Destiny," "the Starlight of his Boyhood," "the Lady of his Love"—

Wed with one  
Who did not love her better.

3. **His Earliest Verse.**—From his boyhood he had written verses, and in 1808 he published a volume of poetry,<sup>1</sup> the *Hours of Idleness*, a collection of juvenile pieces which gave little promise of his future fame. *The Edinburgh Review* fell upon it, and a slashing criticism, mangling the poor little volume, after the fashion of the time, appeared from the pen of Lord Brougham. The effect on Byron, as he said years after, was one of "rage, and resistance, and redress; but not despondency nor despair." A year later he retaliated with *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, a satire in heroic metre showing his discipleship to Pope, in which he attacked not only "Scotch Reviewers"—Jeffrey, the editor of *The Edinburgh*, "the greatest of the train," "blundering Brougham," and Scott, for taking money for his work—but also Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey:—

And thou, too, Scott! resign to minstrels rude  
The wilder slogan of a border feud:  
Let others spin their meagre lines for hire;  
Enough for genius, if itself inspire!  
Let Southey sing, although his teeming muse,  
Prolific every spring, be too profuse;  
Let simple Wordsworth chime his childish verse,  
And brother Coleridge lull the babe at nurse;  
Let spectre-mongering Lewis aim, at most,  
To rouse the galleries, or to raise a ghost.

His attacks were too vague and sweeping; some of the opinions, hastily formed, he retracted; and many years afterwards he said of the poem himself: "The satire was written when I was very young and very angry, and fully bent on displaying my wrath and my wit; and now I am haunted by the ghosts of my assertions." The satire, which inflicted a chastisement unparalleled for many years, was a distinct success, and several editions were called for. It may be well to mention here, that Byron never intended to accept any money for his poems; yet financial and

<sup>1</sup> In 1806 he published at Newark a collection—*Fugitive Pieces*—which by a friend's advice he at once suppressed.



other considerations caused him to do so, and he received altogether from his publisher, John Murray, about £20,000 for his works. He was exceedingly generous, and some of his friends shared largely in the remunerations.

4. **Continental Travel.**—Byron now undertook a two years' trip (1809-11) on the Continent—through Spain, the Mediterranean coast, Turkey, and Greece—which added much to his knowledge of life and of mankind. Keenly observant of incidents and scenes, he laid up a rich store of material, which he turned to use in his future work. It was during these travels that his true genius awoke to its previously unknown powers. "I have written," he says, "some four thousand lines of one kind or another on my travels." He returned to England with two cantos of *Childe Harold* ready for publication; the poem appeared in 1812, and its success was so great that seven editions were called for in a month. A year later *The Giaour*<sup>1</sup> was published, the first of the series of romantic poems which helped to carry him to the highest pinnacle of public favour. In these—*The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, *The Siege of Corinth*, and *Parisina*—we have vivid descriptions of the people and scenery of the Turkish peninsula, of Greece and its islands, of the fiercer passions of love and hate, of bloodshed and war, and through all stalk rival chiefs, rebel heroes, renegades, or piratical adventurers like Conrad—

Link'd with one virtue and a thousand crimes.

In London he made many new friends—Moore, Sheridan, Rogers, and Scott; for the last he conceived a warm admiration, and afterwards styled him "the monarch of Parnassus," "the Wizard" and "the Ariosto of the North."<sup>2</sup> In 1815 Byron married Anne Isabella Milbanke, daughter of Sir Ralph Milbanke; but a year later, after the birth of a daughter, Ada, she left him, never to return. Rarely has any domestic circumstance been the subject of more comment than this incident in two human lives, but of the actual reasons of the separation nothing very definite has ever come to light. The risk to domestic happiness with a man of Lord Byron's

<sup>1</sup> An infidel—a disbeliever in the Moslem religion.

<sup>2</sup> Ariosto (1474—1533), an Italian poet, author of the metrical romance *Orlando Furioso*.

temperament was great; but Lady Byron seems to have been, unhappily, a particularly unsuitable wife for him, and after her departure she steadfastly refused a reunion. Byron had an unfortunate fondness for unduly airing his failings and sins, and bore in consequence the whole odium of the domestic rupture. He gave vent to his feelings in verse, and brought down upon himself the vengeance of the British public in one of its righteous fits, and the poet, the spoilt child of the previous day, was in the year 1816 driven out of England, ruined in character and prospects, and never saw his native land again.

5. **His Exile.**—He passed through Belgium, and, visiting Waterloo, wrote his famous stanzas on the battle. For a while he settled at Geneva, where he met Shelley, and formed that striking literary friendship which affected the life and work of both. While in Switzerland he wrote *The Prisoner of Chillon*, the third canto of *Childe Harold*, and a number of shorter poems, including that terribly gloomy piece of realism, *Darkness*, which describes the extinction of life on the earth. During this period of wandering and fellowship with Shelley he finished *Manfred*, a dramatic poem full of gloomy introspection and the supernatural, inspired by the wild grandeur and sublimity of the Central Alps. Then followed *Beppo*, a well-sustained social satire in *ottava rima*,<sup>1</sup> and *Mazeppa*, a vivid description of the terrible ride of the victim bound on the back of the wild Tartar horse:—

Away, away, my steed and I,  
Upon the pinions of the wind,  
All human dwellings left behind;  
We sped like meteors through the sky,  
When with its crackling sound the night  
Is chequer'd with the northern light:  
Town—village—none were on our track,  
But a wild plain of far extent  
And bounded by a forest black. . . .  
But fast we fled, away, away—  
And I could neither sigh nor pray;  
And my cold sweat-drops fell like rain  
Upon the courser's bristling mane;  
But, snorting still with rage and fear,  
He flew upon his wild career.

<sup>1</sup> *Ottava rima* is an Italian form of versification, consisting of eight lines, of which the first six rhyme alternately, and the last two form a couplet.

The third canto of *Childe Harold* was completed in 1816, and the fourth two years later; taken together they may be regarded almost as a separate poem from the first two, written as they were in the plenitude of his poetic power. Byron lived at Ravenna, Bologna, and Venice, and during the year 1820 showed an intense literary activity. He worked at *Don Juan*, and wrote his dramatic pieces *Marino Faliero*, *Sardanapalus*, *The Two Foscari*, *Cain*, *The Deformed Transformed*. His *Cain* and *Manfred* are the finest of the dramas; the former raised a perfect storm in England, and a hue and cry of insular alarm resounded throughout the land. A month later he increased the storm of indignation to a whirlwind of wrath by the publication of his *Vision of Judgment* in *ottava rima*, a mercilessly satiric reply to Southey's absurd and profane apotheosis, with the same title, of George III. In the preface Southey attacked Byron, and particularly *Don Juan*, which he considered a lewd and impious product of the "Satanic School," of which the author was the Coryphaeus.<sup>1</sup> Byron's *Vision*, though profane, is one of the most finished, sustained, and vigorous personal satires in English.

While at Pisa and Genoa Byron continued *Don Juan* to the sixteenth canto (1823). He also wrote *The Age of Bronze*, a political satire against the Convention of Cintra,<sup>2</sup> and *The Island*, telling in rimed-heroic verse the tale of the mutiny of the Bounty. *Don Juan* is also in *ottava rima*, a metre particularly suited to the narrative form and serio-comic nature of the poem, and one which he manages with great dexterity and skill.

*Don Juan* is an attractive youth shipwrecked on one of the Cyclades; his life is saved by Haidée, the beautiful daughter of the pirate owner of the island. After a short period of love and romance he is sold as a slave by the father of Haidée, and the daughter dies of a broken heart. He is purchased for the Sultana of Turkey, but escapes and reaches St. Petersburg, where he becomes

<sup>1</sup> The Coryphaeus was the leader of the chorus in the ancient Greek drama; in modern use the word means simply a leader.

<sup>2</sup> By this Convention (August 30th, 1808) it was agreed that the French under Junot should evacuate Portugal, and be conveyed to France in English vessels.

the favourite of Catharine,<sup>1</sup> and is despatched to England on affairs of State. In rapid transitions and vivid descriptions the poem is *Childe Harold* repeated; but in *Don Juan* we have maturity and a rare knowledge and experience of the world and the many-sidedness of human life. As a whole it lacks that wider vision and the humanity which triumph over self alone can give. The whole tone of the morality is low; but it contains some of Byron's finest poetry, while his sanity, common sense, sarcasm, caustic wit, cynicism, and incisiveness combine to give it permanent human interest, and make it one of the greatest social satires in the language.

Apostle of liberty as he had always been, with little respect for thrones or dynasties, Byron left Genoa in the summer of 1823 to help the Greeks in their struggle for independence. Landing finally at Missolonghi, he rendered signal service to the cause, and exhibited great courage, resourcefulness, rare judgment of character, and exceptional talent in all business affairs. But the place was unhealthy; and a rheumatic fever, brought on by exposure, and working on an exhausted frame, caused his death after a week's illness. This, the result of his efforts in the cause of oppressed nationality, was a noble and fitting end to a life of great activity, in which the cup of sensation, adventure, and the most varied experience had been drunk to the full. His body was embalmed, brought to England, and buried in the family vault at Hucknall Church, near Newstead. He was denied a final resting-place in Westminster Abbey, of which he himself had a presentiment, for he says in *Childe Harold*—

If dull oblivion bar  
My name from out the Temple where the dead  
Are honoured by the nations—let it be.

**6. His Work.**—If success is to be measured by popularity, no poet ever achieved greater than Byron, for his poetry became the most popular that Europe has known, and Byronism was established as a vogue throughout the Continent. No man ever impressed his personality so strongly upon his generation: he appealed to the imagination and sympathy of mankind in a series of striking characters, each of whom is identical with himself. Across the

<sup>1</sup> Catharine II., wife of Peter III., was proclaimed Empress of Russia on the deposition of her husband in 1762, and reigned until her death in 1796.



stage of *Childe Harold* and his dramatic pieces the gloomy hero, communing with despair, stalks haunted by the ghosts of the past, and pours forth a lava-stream of scorn and irony, lit up by the lurid light of a fiery indignation. *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan* are a kind of poetic diary, spread over a number of years, of which Byron pithily said to a friend while on a voyage to Greece: "If things are farcical, they will do for *Don Juan*; if heroical, you shall have another canto of *Childe Harold*." Byron's sensibility, his theatrical display, his self-revelation, his passion, his cynicism, his "vital scorn," and the romantic atmosphere and surroundings in which he moved, captured the imagination and dulled the reason and senses of all classes, and made him, as he styled himself, "the grand Napoleon of the realms of rime." The Continent of Europe was not then the holiday-ground it has since become, with much of its novelty worn off. Hence Byron's vivid descriptions, conveyed in a torrential flow of rhetoric, and his unrivalled powers of declamation, from which the personal element is never absent, overwhelmed the balance of literary judgment as to the gravity of the defects of his poetry. He was fond of weak and startling rimes, and was deficient in that sensitiveness of ear and delicacy of taste necessary for the production of perfect lyric melody. But for measured sweep, rhythmic movement, and balanced rush of words, Byron in his finer pieces can hardly be excelled; he is above all things the poet of action, passion, and force. A reaction in time set in, and it became the custom to depreciate him unduly. Yet his brilliance and power in his more impassioned moments cannot be questioned; and numerous examples of his unrivalled quality of description will be found in *Childe Harold*, such as the stanzas on Waterloo, the Address to the Ocean, the Cataract of Velino, the Dying Gladiator, the Thunderstorm in the Alps, and St. Peter's in Rome. How far he identified himself with Nature and its forces is well exemplified in the stanzas on the Thunderstorm, concluding:—

Could I embody and unbosom now  
That which is most within me,—could I wreak  
My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw  
Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak,

All that I would have sought, and all I seek,  
 Bear, know, feel, and yet breathe—into *one* word,  
 And that one word were Lightning, I would speak :  
 But as it is, I live and die unheard,  
 With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword.

Byron was born in an age teeming with great events, an age that had seen the death of old institutions and the birth of new. Ardent, passionate, and impetuous, he became the embodiment of the spirit of revolt, and spoke trumpet-tongued in verse. He showed no reverence for customs and conventions which most men held dear. In his sweeping generalisations he was destructive ; but he could not from the shattered ruins of things rebuild. When Byron wrote unaffectedly and did not pose, there was an apparent sincerity, a frank revelation of himself, and a natural candour in his utterance, which carried conviction, and stamped the impress of his marked individuality and genius upon the thought and literature of his age.

Byron was not, like some of the Elizabethan lyrical writers, an artist in little, or capable of fine work on a small scale ; he impresses us in mass, and it is only in his longer poems that his genius finds freest and most adequate expression. Of his shorter pieces, the *Epistle to Augusta* (his sister) is unusually tender in tone, the first verse of which runs :—

My sister ! my sweet sister ! if a name  
 Dearer and purer were, it should be thine ;  
 Mountains and seas divide us, but I claim  
 No tears, but tenderness to answer mine :  
 Go where I will, to me thou art the same—  
 A loved regret which I would not resign.

Another characteristic and familiar example is that passionate lyric from *Don Juan*, "The isles of Greece ! the isles of Greece !" containing the fine stanza :—

The mountains look on Marathon—  
 And Marathon looks on the sea ;  
 And musing there an hour alone,  
 I dreamed that Greece might still be free ;  
 For standing on the Persians' grave,  
 I could not deem myself a slave.

The whole poem is a burning call to arms—one of the patriot-songs of the world. An even loftier inspiration and a solemn

lyrical gravity (the outcome perhaps of Byron's friendship with Shelley) characterise his *Prometheus* :—

Titan ! to whose immortal eyes  
 The sufferings of mortality,  
 Seen in their sad reality,  
 Were not as things that gods despise,  
 What was thy pity's recompense ?  
 A silent suffering and intense ;  
 The rock, the vulture, and the chain,  
 All that the proud can feel of pain,  
 The agony they do not show,  
 The suffocating sense of woe  
 Which speaks but in its loneliness.

The poet becomes self-reminiscent, but he breaks from that strain in the noble words—

Thy godlike crime was to be kind,  
 To render with thy precepts less  
 The sum of human wretchedness,  
 And strengthen Man with his own mind.

7. **His Character.**—The life of Byron, like that of Burns, has been the subject of exceptional comment and criticism, and his character and conduct have almost invariably received unsparing condemnation. If heredity accounts for anything in human life, it accounts for much in the case of Byron. His inherited defects were intensified by the treatment he received in childhood ; when he grew up the world proved no wiser—it made him the darling of a day and the outcast of the morrow, and he “ bore through Europe the pageant of his bleeding heart.” He was solitary in his misery, and could, as in *Manfred*, say with truth :—

From my youth upwards  
 My spirit walked not with the souls of men,  
 Nor looked upon the earth with human eyes. . . .  
 My joys, my griefs, my passions, and my powers,  
 Made me a stranger.

His unhappiness and suffering, however sincere or however affected they may have been, are seen on every page of his work. In the chaos and confusion of European life and politics, the natural reaction of the Revolutionary Movement, Byron was tossed on a sea of troubled waters, and in accordance with Lucifer's advice to Cain, he could but “ think and endure.” He lacked control

over his will, his emotions, his impulses, and his sympathies: he was indeed what he says of Man, a—

Pendulum betwixt a smile and tears.

That he could be generous and kind we have ample evidence ; but with his passions and his pride he could be equally erring in the other extreme. While there is much to condemn, there is much to excuse, and still more to pity, in the life and character of one who, as he says of himself in *Lara*, was—

Left by his sire, too young such loss to know,  
Lord of himself ;—that heritage of woe,  
That fearful empire which the human breast  
But holds to rob the heart within of God !

(i) When Byron died, his friend Stanhope wrote : " England has lost her brightest genius, Greece her noblest friend." Shelley had said of him : " He touched the chord to which a million hearts responded." Goethe remarked : " Byron is different from all the other English poets, and for the most part greater." The Italian patriot Mazzini sang his praises with hearty enthusiasm : " It is since Byron that we continentals have turned to study Shakespeare and other English writers . . . He led the genius of Britain on a pilgrimage throughout all Europe."

(ii) " His greatness as well as his weakness lay in the fact that from boyhood battle was the breath of his being. To tell him not to fight, was like telling Wordsworth not to reflect, or Shelley not to sing. His instrument is a trumpet of challenge ; and he lived, as he appropriately died, in the progress of an unaccomplished campaign. His work is neither perfect architecture nor fine mosaic ; but like that of his intellectual ancestors, the elder Elizabethans, whom he perversely maligned, it is all animated by the spirit of action and enterprise."—JOHN NICHOL.

(iii) " Whatever changes may come, however fashions may vary in criticism, there remains in Byron's poetry a source of permanent human interest, the intense utterance of an individuality of immense intellectual resource and possibility of moral grandeur, of such an individuality fallen upon evil days, suffering the life-long pain of surrender to a lower set of impulses, and gifted with the mastery over the larger, stronger effects of language unmatched before or since his time."—PROFESSOR MACNEILE DIXON.

8. **Percy Bysshe Shelley** (1792—1822) was the second of the three great poets of the period who died early, and before age had given that riper knowledge and wisdom which enable life to yield its richest fruit. Shelley was born near Horsham, in Sussex, of a family of ancient lineage. He was a beautiful child, given to lonely habits and much reading, and of a very sensitive nature—characteristics which marked him through life. After a couple of years at



a school in Brentford, he went to Eton in 1804. A spirit always in revolt against tyranny and oppression, he suffered much during his school days. At Eton he was known as "Mad Shelley," an epithet to which his excitable temperament, and his love for inconvenient experiments in chemistry and physics, gave merited occasion. In 1810 he matriculated at University College, Oxford, where he formed a very strong friendship with Thomas Jefferson Hogg, to whose biography we are indebted for the best account of the life of the poet during this period. As a boy Shelley had written some ineffectual verse, and a couple of wild and impossible tales after the manner of "Monk" Lewis and Mrs. Radcliffe; but these products gave little promise of the future development of his genius. During his school and university days Shelley read widely and outside the tracks of prescribed studies, and was particularly attracted to the study of metaphysics. After a couple of terms at Oxford, the young man published a little pamphlet of a couple of pages on *The Necessity of Atheism*; for this he and his friend Hogg, who chivalrously shared the blame with him, were expelled from Oxford. His expulsion caused an open quarrel with his father, who finally allowed him £200 a year. He took up his residence in London, and made the acquaintance of one of his sister's school friends, Harriet Westbrook, an attractive girl, the daughter of a retired coffee-house keeper. The girl, under the spell of a romantic passion and fancied ill-treatment at home and at school, appealed for protection to Shelley, who honourably married her, to the great indignation of his father. After a period of three years' wandering and more or less unsettled existence, during which he carried on a propaganda of revolutionary doctrines, Shelley's wife separated from him, a case analogous to that of Byron, the incidents of whose lives are in some respects so similar. The elements of a tragedy lay in Shelley's foolish, impetuous, and unsuitable marriage, and the tragedy came. Shelley had made the acquaintance of William Godwin, the noted author of *Political Justice*, and came to be on terms of great friendship with him and his family. In the estrangement that had set in between him and his wife, Shelley in his unhappiness found sympathy and affection in a kindred spirit, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin. Sharing her father's and Shelley's

views on the marriage contract (which Harriet also is said to have professed), she left home (1814) with Shelley for Switzerland, and they returned to England after a six weeks' tour. Some six months later Shelley came to a settlement with his father, by which he received £1,000 a year, £200 of which he settled on his wife Harriet. But in the December of 1816 the unfortunate woman drowned herself in the Serpentine, an end she had contemplated even in her girlhood. Shelley then married Mary Godwin, and during his remaining years he found in her a true companion and sympathetic helpmeet.

9. **Queen Mab.**—Shelley's earliest important work, and the one by which he is widely known, was *Queen Mab*, first privately printed in 1813; it was pirated in 1821 by a bookseller named Clark, to the indignation of Shelley, who in vain tried to suppress it. *Queen Mab* is an immature work, and as a poem cannot rank with Shelley's later productions. It is full of the poet's revolutionary ideas on religion and social institutions, expressed with great fervour and much rhetorical declamation. In a "magic car" the "Fairy Mab" descends and takes the soul of Ianthe from the body and carries it aloft to the "Hall of Spells":—

Below lay stretched the universe !  
There, far as the remotest line  
That bounds imagination's flight,  
Countless and unending orbs  
In mazy motion intermingled,  
Yet still fulfilled immutably  
Eternal Nature's law.

An historic survey is made of the ancient kingdoms of the earth, and lessons are drawn from the crimes of rulers, the horrors of war, and religious bigotry and intolerance. A prophetic forecast of the ideal future to which the poet aspires closes the poem, and the soul of Ianthe again enters the car, descends to earth, and rejoins the body.

10. **Alastor.**—Shelley lived for a while in a house near the border of Windsor Forest, and here in 1816 he wrote his fine poem *Alastor* (an avenging spiritual being), in blank verse. It is a straining after ideal beauty in earthly form, to which he so often turned—that futile effort, as Shelley himself says, of "seeking in a mortal image the

likeness of what is, perhaps, eternal." This allegorical poem, Shelley says in his preface, "represents a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe." The poet wanders far, and in the valley of Cashmere he has a vision in his sleep:—

A veiled maid  
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.  
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul  
Heard in the calm of thought.

He pursues the "bright shadow of that lovely dream," and from the lone Chorasmian shore embarks on a little shallop and is carried by the rush of waters through a terrible cavern in the Caucasus:—

Evening came on ;  
The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues  
High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray  
That canopied his path o'er the waste deep ;  
Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,  
Entwined in duskier wreaths her braided locks  
O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of day ;  
Night followed clad with stars. . . . At midnight  
The moon arose : and lo ! the ethereal cliffs  
Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone  
Among the stars like sunlight, and around  
Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves  
Bursting and eddying irresistibly  
Rage and resound for ever.

The poet is carried on through many wanderings and varied scenes, described with dioramic rapidity, in majestic verse and splendid lyric movement, until he meets with death. In intensity, magnificent imaginative descriptions, in solemnity, and in eloquence and felicity of utterance, *Alastor* rises to the highest level of romantic poetry.

11. **The Revolt of Islam.**—In 1816 the Shelleys spent some months in Switzerland, and met Byron at Geneva, where Mrs. Shelley wrote her weird tale of horror—*Frankenstein*. On their return they settled for a time at Marlow on the Thames, and here Shelley wrote *The Revolt of Islam*. In this wonderful poem, written in the Spenserian stanza, Shelley pours forth his loftiest aspirations for the future of mankind, and expresses with passionate intensity and poetic fervour his ideals on the social state, and arraigns the existing customs and conventions which regulate human conduct. "Love,"

says Shelley in his preface, "is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world." A thread of narrative runs through the poem. The hero of the epic is Laon, who stirs Islam—the nations of the Levant under Turkish rule—to a struggle for liberty, and in Cythna he finds the ideal woman, the true helpmeet in his efforts against despotism. But the short daylight of freedom is soon eclipsed, and Laon and Cythna fall martyrs to the tyrant. A bright winged shape, Cythna's child, meets these spirits and takes them in a boat, a "curved shell of hollow pearl," and on the fourth day of sailing the boat finds its haven at the "Temple of the Spirit." *The Revolt of Islam* overpowers by its diffuseness, its glowing splendour, its profuse wealth of imagery and language, its flights of rapture, and its lyric intensity, passion, and emotion.

12. **Last Years in Italy.**—In 1818 Shelley left England—like Byron, never to return—and went to Italy, that "paradise of exiles," as he styles it. A visit to Venice to see Byron resulted in *Julian and Maddalo*, a conversation between the two poets in which occur the beautiful lines:—

Most wretched men  
Are cradled into poetry by wrong:  
They learn in suffering what they teach in song.

Next year he wrote, while in Rome, the larger portion of his greatest poem, *Prometheus Unbound*, and also the tragedy of *The Cenci*, which was written at Leghorn. These works, among the greatest literary achievements of the nineteenth century, are widely different. The *Prometheus* stands alone among modern dramatic poems, and is a wonderful product of a mind that had thoroughly absorbed the Hellenic spirit and feeling. In pure lyric beauty it is supreme. The tale is slight: Prometheus, the champion of humanity, is bound by Zeus the tyrant to the icy rocks of the Indian Caucasus; but the oppressor is overthrown by Demogorgon, and Prometheus is reunited to Asia—Beauty incarnate—who sheds light and love upon the world. But there is little of the purely dramatic in the poem; the figures are fanciful, mythical, and remote, and not invested with sufficient reality to give them a human interest; he inspires, however, the spirits and spheres with lyric raptures that thrill the ear with the



ethereal strains of musical and harmonious verse. Selections give but a very poor idea of the lyrical wealth Shelley lavishes on this great dramatic poem:—

On a poet's lips I slept  
 Dreaming like a love-adept  
 In the sound his breathing kept;  
 Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,  
 But feeds on the ærial kisses  
 Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.  
 He will watch from dawn to gloom  
 The lake-reflected sun illumine  
 The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,  
 Nor heed nor see what things they be;  
 But from these create he can  
 Forms more real than living man,  
 Nurslings of immortality!  
 One of these awakened me,  
 And I sped to succour thee.

The beautiful "Song of Spirits" has the rhythmic flow, the ease, and ring of the finest Elizabethan lyrics:—

To the deep! to the deep,  
                                     Down, down!  
 Through the shade of sleep,  
 Through the cloudy strife  
 Of Death and of Life;  
 Through the veil and the bar  
 Of things which seem and are,  
 Even to the steps of the remotest throne,  
                                     Down, down!

Shelley uses the most varied measures, and music in the most varied keys from "an ocean of splendour" to the notes that fall on the ear—

With the lullaby  
 Of winds that die  
 On the bosom of their own harmony.

(i) "The world in which the action is supposed to move rings with spirit voices; and what these spirits sing is melody more purged of mortal dross than any other poet's ear has caught, while listening to his own heart's song, or to the rhythm of the world."—J. A. SYMONDS.

(ii) "*Prometheus Unbound*, however remote the foundation of its subject-matter, and unactual in executive treatment, does in reality express the most modern of conceptions—the utmost reach of speculation of a mind which burst up all crust of custom and prescription like a volcano, and imaged forth a future wherein man should be indeed the autocrat and renovated renovator of his planet."—W. M. ROSSETTI.

*The Cenci* is in a very different vein, and Shelley rigidly restrained his hand in shaping the drama in clear and well-defined lines. No elaboration, picturesque details, or passionate rhetoric were needed in dramatising the dreadful tradition of the Cenci family, containing as it did the very essence of tragic horror in itself. Shelley treats it with an ease and grasp, with a sense of dramatic form and structure, and a suppressed poetic passion, that link it with the Elizabethan tragedies in power, vigour, and style.

13. **Odes and Adonais.**—About this time Shelley wrote some of his shorter and best known lyrical poems, which are among the choicest treasures in the whole world of song: the odes, *To the West Wind* and *To a Skylark*, *The Sensitive Plant*, *The Cloud*, all “profuse strains of unpremeditated art.” *The Witch of Atlas* (1820) is an “Ariel-flight of fancy” after the vision of the ideal beauty of the world, “the veiled lady” of *Alastor*. In *Epipsychidion* he idealises a young girl, Emilia Viviani, and expounds in the highest flights of rapturous emotion his intellectual and platonic passion for the girl, whose wrongs, like Harriet Westbrook’s, seem to have been more fancied than real.

Shelley displayed a matchless skill in versification, and is the only English poet who managed with complete success the Italian *terza rima* with its complicated triplets; this he employed in one of his choicest poems, left unfinished—*The Triumph of Life*. The following lines, from the matchless description in *Epipsychidion* of an Aegean island, show how he could break away from the measured beat of the rime-heroic metre:—

The wingèd storms, chanting their thunder-psalm  
To other lands, leave azure chasms of calm  
Over this isle, or weep themselves in dew,  
From which its fields and woods ever renew  
Their green and golden immortality.

In 1821 he wrote *Adonais* on the death of Keats, an elegy rivalled in English only by Milton’s *Lycidas*. This wonderful dirge, written in the Spenserian stanza, is a masterpiece of sustained melody. The transitions of thought and philosophic speculation on the spirit of the dead are kept subordinate to the keynote of

sorrow and mourning, which is dominant throughout the poem. "It is a highly wrought piece of art," as Shelley says of it; for his mastery over the whole scale of emotions, his ardent and impassioned powers of lyric expression, his flights of spiritual exultation, and his unrivalled command of the rhythmic movement of language, were never so perfectly concentrated as in this chaste tribute to the memory of Keats. Two or three stanzas must suffice as examples:—

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;  
 Envy and calumny, and hate and pain,  
 And that unrest which men miscall delight,  
 Can touch him not and torture not again;  
 From the contagion of the world's slow stain  
 He is secure, and now can never mourn  
 A heart grown cold, a head grown grey, in vain;  
 Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,  
 With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

He is made one with Nature: there is heard  
 His voice in all her music, from the moan  
 Of thunder to the song of night's sweet bird;  
 He is a presence to be felt and known  
 In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,  
 Spreading itself where'er that Power may move  
 Which has withdrawn his being to its own;  
 Which wields the world with never-wearied love,  
 Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

The breath whose might I have invoked in song  
 Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven  
 Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng  
 Whose sails were never to the tempest given;  
 The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven!  
 I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;  
 Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,  
 The soul of Adonais, like a star,  
 Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

The last stanza is strangely prophetic of the poet's own approaching end.

Shelley's sympathy with the Greek struggle for independence resulted in *Hellas*, a dramatic poem of unequal merit; but his power of lyric expression is here again unrivalled as he sounds every note in the passion-cry for liberty and freedom.

14. **Death.**—Shelley lived much in the open air; he was very fond of boating and sailing, and while indulging in these pastimes he wrote a great deal of his poetry. At Pisa during the summer of 1822 he spent the greater portion of his time in a small sailing boat; on July 8th he left Leghorn, where he went to see Leigh Hunt, to return to Pisa. A sudden thunderstorm arose, the sea was immediately covered by a black cloud, and the vessels in the Bay of Spezzia were wrapped in darkness. In about twenty minutes the sea was clear again; but one watching with a glass from the Leghorn lighthouse saw that Shelley's boat had disappeared, and there is reason to think she was run down by one of the Italian sailing boats. The body of Shelley, and those of his friend Williams and the boy Vivian, were cast ashore, and by the quarantine laws of Italy had to be burned. The ashes of the poet were placed in an iron box and buried in the Protestant Cemetery at Rome, near the grave of his child William and that of Keats.

15. **An Estimate.**—The intense animus that Shelley stirred up against himself as a propagandist blinded the eyes of a prejudiced age against recognising his transcendent merits as a poet. Yet no young poet ever had stronger desires for bettering human society, or nobler aspirations for its destiny; and in no heart did a passionate love for his fellow-man beat more strongly than in that of Shelley. The testimony of the friends who knew him best is decisive on his extraordinary charity and kindness, the purity of his motives, his absolute sincerity, his single-mindedness, and his eager pursuit of ideals in life. "He was," says Byron, "the most gentle, the most amiable, and the least worldly-minded person I ever met; full of delicacy, disinterested beyond all other men, and possessing a degree of genius joined to simplicity as rare as it was admirable." As a reformer he exercised little or no influence. He tried to realise an impossible world, a world only suited for idealists like himself. His poetry—the expression of his thoughts and speculations in whatever field his fancy and emotions led him—suffers in consequence. Shelley was deficient in that balance of judgment, that sanity and sobriety of mind, which can readily estimate the true character of men and the motives



which influence their actions. His imprudence and impulsiveness, in word and deed, often led him beyond the bounds of what was possible to tolerate; and he failed, idealist, and enthusiast, steeped in Godwin's crude philosophy as he was, to see the disastrous effects which the adoption of his doctrines would have brought on society at large. Shelley's magnificent visions, from the sublime heights to which he soared, of a greater destiny to which emancipated man may aspire, however stimulating to some, are to most toilers in this work-a-day world of ours but things that "dreams are made on," with little of the substance clad in wisdom's garb to satisfy their intellectual and spiritual needs. Much of Shelley's work is vague, incoherent, and diffuse; it is wanting in that firmness and grasp of things as they are in real life, which are necessary to convey a convincing message to man. As a writer of lyric verse he is perhaps the greatest of his century, and his legacy of song is priceless. Shelley was an elemental being: he wrote in a white heat of intense poetic rapture and excitement; his power of idealising is beyond that of all other poets; and his verse has "all the complex colours of rainbow hues and the music of involved harmonies."

(i) "The real lesson of his life and writings is not to be sought in any of his doctrines, but rather in his fearless bearing, his resolute loyalty to an unselfish, and in the simplest sense benevolent, ideal. It is this which constitutes his supreme importance for us English at the present time. Ours is an age in which ideals are rare, and we belong to a race in which men who follow them so single-heartedly are not common."—J. A. SYMONDS.

(ii) "Shelley's ideas of a reconstruction of society are indeed often vague or visionary; but there is always present in his poetry the sentiment or feeling which tends to reconstruction, the feeling of love; and the word 'fraternity' is for him at least as potent as the word 'liberty.' In Byron we find an expression of the revolution on its negative side; in Shelley we find this, but also an expression of the revolution on its positive side. As the wave of revolution rolls onward, driven forth from the vast volcanic upheaval in France, and as it becomes a portion of the literary movement of Great Britain, its dark and hissing crest may be the poetry of Byron; but over its tumultuous wave hangs an iris of beauty and promise, and that foam-bow of hope, flashing and failing, and ever reappearing as the wave sweeps on, is the poetry of Shelley."—PROFESSOR DOWDEN.

8 16. **John Keats** (1795—1821), the third of the group of young poets, was the son of a livery-stable keeper in London. The father

died when the boy was only nine years old; he was then at school at Enfield, kept by the Rev. John Clarke, who, with his son Charles Cowden, became a good friend to Keats. At school he learned no Greek, but he saturated his mind with a knowledge of classical mythology from translations and Lemprière's *Dictionary*. He early fell under the influence of Spenser, and Clarke says he "ramped through the scenes of the romance like a young horse turned into a spring meadow." His delight in first reading Chapman's *Homer* is immortalised in the fine sonnet, "Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold." When Keats was fifteen years old, he was apprenticed for a term of five years to a surgeon at Edmonton. In due time he went to London for hospital work, and soon joined the literary circle of which Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, and Godwin were leading figures. His first little volume of poems fell still-born from the press, though it gained the warm admiration of his small circle of friends. In 1818 *Endymion* was published, and notwithstanding a very modest—in fact, deprecatory—preface, enough to take the edge off criticism, it was cruelly and stupidly reviewed by *Blackwood* and the *Quarterly Review*. It was commonly thought at the time, and even by the friends of Keats, that the criticism had a very injurious effect on his spirits, so much so indeed as to hasten his death. Byron twice refers to the subject; in *Don Juan* he wrote:—

John Keats, who was kill'd off by one critique. . . .  
'Tis strange the mind, that fiery particle,  
Should let itself be snuff'd out by an article.

In *Adonais*, too, Shelley pours forth his hot indignation on the "deaf and viperous murderer," the "nameless worm," the "noteless blot on a remembered name." Both poets were, however, out of England at the time, and did not know the facts. The effect on Keats was but temporary; he was of all men least likely to "be snuff'd out by an article"; he took the scourging with a philosophy and good temper hardly expected in one so deeply sensitive to injustice where others were concerned.

17. **Endymion.**—This poem deals with the old Greek myth how that Diana (the Moon), enamoured of a beautiful youth, the shepherd Endymion, visited him nightly as he slept on Mount Latmos.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A mountain in Asia Minor, east of Miletus.

Keats treats the story in his own way. Endymion enters on a quest for Diana, and is led in a series of wanderings through the bowels of the earth, then over the ocean's depths, and finally into the upper air, when he meets the goddess in the form of an Indian maiden. While the poem is Greek in its keen sense of beauty and the joys of nature, in its vivid realisation and colouring of classic life and allegory, there is also a Gothic amplitude and splendour of imagination in its conception, mingled with an Oriental element in its rapid transitions and the magic-like movement of its characters and scenes. *Endymion* is full of true poetry, marked by fine feeling, freshness, and delicacy of touch; but, as Shelley says, its "treasures" are "poured forth with indistinct profusion"; it has the crudeness, the fulness, and excess of youth; and it shows a straining after effect, especially in the use of archaic words and compounds, and an unnecessary departure from grammatical usage, which mar the work and create discord where there should be harmony. The heroic metre is handled with great freedom and a rhythmic movement very different from the measured beat of Pope and his school. The following is an example:—

And lo! from opening clouds, I saw emerge  
The loveliest moon, that ever silver'd o'er  
A shell for Neptune's goblet; she did soar  
So passionately bright, my dazzled soul  
Commingle with her argent spheres did roll  
Through clear and cloudy, even when she went  
At last into a dark and vapoury tent—  
Whereat, methought, the lidless-eyed train  
Of planets all were in the blue again.

**18. Romantic Poems.**—In 1818 Keats wrote *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil*, a sad story taken from Boccaccio. The brothers of Isabella desire her to marry a rich suitor, and with selfish ends in view they murder her lover Lorenzo and hide the body. The secret is disclosed to Isabella in a vision. She severs the head and places it in a flower-pot with a plant of sweet basil. The plant grows rapidly, but the brothers discover her secret, remove the head, and fly the country in fear, whereupon the sister dies. The story, in octave stanzas, is well and pathetically told, and shows a firmer hand and greater capacity of workmanship than are shown in *Endymion*. The following verse gives an example of the style:—

And she forgot the stars, the moon, and sun,  
 And she forgot the blue above the trees,  
 And she forgot the dells where waters run,  
 And she forgot the chilly autumn breeze ;  
 She had no knowledge when the day was done,  
 And the new morn she saw not ; but in peace  
 Hung over her sweet basil evermore,  
 And moisten'd it with tears unto the core.

In 1819 Keats wrote *The Eve of St. Agnes*, a poem in the Spenserian stanza, which marks a further advance in poetic power and technique. It is a tale of sweet romantic love, rich in picturesque details, and in the music and melody of words, with a glow of colour not unworthy of Spenser himself. *Lamia*, another long poem, was written in the same year. It is taken from Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and tells of a serpent-lady who fascinates Lycius, a young student of Corinth. She creates a splendid magic palace ; but at the nuptial feast she vanishes under the cold gaze of Apollonius the philosopher, and Lycius dies. *Lamia* is perhaps the most perfect and finished of Keats's poems. It is written in rime-heroic metre and in the style and manner of Dryden. The poem is marked by a free use of the Alexandrine,<sup>1</sup> differing greatly in this respect from *Endymion*, and the verse runs with a subtle ease and energy well suited to the subject. The following lines are a good example of the style:—

From every ill  
 Of life have I preserved thee to this day,  
 And shall I see thee made a serpent's prey?  
 Then Lamia breathed death-breath : the Sophist's eye,  
 Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly,  
 Keen, cruel, perçant, stinging : she, as well  
 As her weak hand would any meaning tell,  
 Motion'd him to be silent : vainly so :  
 He look'd and look'd again a level—No !  
 " A serpent ! " echoed he : no sooner said,  
 Than with a frightful scream, she vanishèd.  
 And Lycius' arms were empty of delight,  
 As were his limbs of life, from that same night.

19. **Hyperion.**—During the time Keats was engaged on these

<sup>1</sup> An Alexandrine is a line of six iambic feet. The second line of the following extract from Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (l. 356) is an example:—

A needless Alexandrine ends the song  
 That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along.



poems he also wrote *Hyperion*. In it he returns to Greek mythology, to the elder gods, the Titans and the Olympic deities, and he purposed to tell of the fall of the sun-god Hyperion and the rise of Apollo. The poem is unfinished; but it is the greatest of his works and one of the finest poems in the language. Shelley said of it: "I consider the fragment of *Hyperion* as second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years." Byron, with somewhat extravagant praise, remarked: "It seems actually inspired by the Titans and sublime as Æschylus." The poem was not written at once; Keats laboured at it from time to time, and finally gave up, saying "there were too many Miltonic inversions in it." Some analogy exists, and the Miltonic influence is apparent; but *Hyperion* is not Miltonic in manner or matter in any true sense of the word; the colour and tone of the work are Keats's own. The exuberance and florid diction of *Endymion* are absent in *Hyperion*; there is a grandeur, yet a simplicity, purity, and mastery of style, which show that had Keats lived to maturity he would have stood among the greatest poets of all time. The following lines exhibit that commingling of the classic and romantic elements so characteristic of Keats:—

But horrors, portioned to a giant nerve,  
 Oft made Hyperion ache. His palace bright,  
 Bastion'd with pyramids of glowing gold,  
 And touch'd with shades of bronzed obelisks,  
 Glared a blood-red through all its thousand courts,  
 Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries;  
 And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds  
 Flush'd angrily; while sometimes eagles' wings,  
 Unseen before by gods or wondering men,  
 Darken'd the place; and neighing steeds were heard,  
 Not heard before by gods or wondering men. . . .  
 He paced away the pleasant hours of ease  
 With stride colossal, on from hall to hall;  
 While far within each aisle and deep recess,  
 His winged minions in close clusters stood,  
 Amazed and full of fear.

20. **Shorter Poems.**—It is by his shorter poems that Keats is more generally known; and his finest are the odes—*On a Grecian Urn*, *To a Nightingale*, *On Melancholy*, *To Psyche*, *To Autumn*—

and his beautiful romantic ballad, one of the finest in the language, *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. In the odes we find crystallised, as it were, that refined sense and worship of beauty so characteristic of Keats. They are full of emotion and melody, and sound the keenest notes of sadness and joy. From them may be gathered some of the choicest poetic phrases in English:—

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter.

Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

She dwells with beauty—beauty that must die;  
And joy, whose hand is ever at his lips  
Bidding adieu.

The weariness, the fever, and the fret,  
Here where men sit and hear each other groan.

Charmed magic casements opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn.

In the beginning of 1820 the worst symptoms of consumption (a family malady) developed in Keats, and in the September of that year he was obliged to go to Italy for the winter, accompanied by a young friend, an artist, Arthur Severn. The poet's misery and unhappiness were intensified by his love for Fanny Brawne, to whom he was engaged. She was a somewhat vain and shallow girl, who little understood the depth and strength of the poet's passionate attachment. Keats lingered through the winter, attended by Severn with the most assiduous care and watchfulness, and died in February, 1821. He was buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome; and in a grave beside him lie the remains of his friend, who died in 1879.

(i) "If the fulfilment may ever safely be prophesied from the promise England appears to have lost in Keats one whose gifts in poetry have rarely been surpassed."—FRANCIS T. PALGRAVE.

(ii) "I think it probable that by power, as well as by temperament and aim, he was the most Shakespearian spirit that has lived since Shakespeare . . . and that in his premature death our literature has sustained its greatest loss."—SIDNEY COLVIN.

(iii) "By his early death he was doomed to be the poet of youthfulness; by being the poet of youthfulness he was privileged to become and to remain

enduringly the poet of rapt expectation and passionate delight."—WILLIAM M. ROSSETTI.

(iv) "From Keats we date the English poetry of culture, the poetry which depends for its effects upon sentiments that bore their fruit in past ages, upon the glory of ancient heroisms, the pathos of dead faiths, the romance of buried loves."—PROFESSOR MACNEILE DIXON.

21. **Thomas Moore** (1779—1852), the friend and biographer of Byron, was born in Dublin of Roman Catholic parents, and educated at a good local school and at Trinity College. At the university he cultivated his poetic gifts, which showed themselves at an early age. He was a member of the Historical Society, and shared with his friend and fellow student, Robert Emmet, the revolutionary principles then rife. The dreadful Irish Rebellion of '98 modified his views; but he remained to the end of his life a staunch advocate for the removal of all Catholic disabilities. In 1799 he went to London, and entered the Middle Temple as a law student; and in the next year he published a translation of the *Odes of Anacreon*,<sup>1</sup> which he had worked at during his college days. It was dedicated to the Prince of Wales, who afterwards became the target for his shafts of satire. Moore soon became a pet of society, and was admired, flattered, and somewhat spoilt, for his conversational powers, his musical skill, and the new element of variety he introduced by singing his own songs. But he never lost his good qualities, and was held in the highest estimation by the leading men of his day. In 1803 he was appointed Registrar of the Admiralty Court in the Bermudas; he crossed the Atlantic, arranged for a deputy, and took a tour through Canada and the United States. In 1806 he published his *Odes and Epistles*, which were severely criticised by Jeffrey in *The Edinburgh Review*.

22. **Irish Melodies.**—In 1807 appeared the first and second numbers of his *Irish Melodies*, in which Moore followed the example of Burns in making a national collection of songs wedded to old Irish airs. The *Melodies* achieved an astonishing popularity, especially in Ireland; Moore, like Burns, touched the national heart, for he brought back to life the old music, by wedding it

<sup>1</sup> Anacreon (circa 563—478 B.C.) was a famous Greek lyric poet, who sang chiefly the praises of love and wine.

to liquid, flowing words, full of sentiment and feeling. He says of his work :—

Dear Harp of my Country ! in darkness I found thee,  
The cold chain of silence had hung o'er thee long,  
When proudly, my own Island Harp, I unbound thee,  
And gave all thy chords to light, freedom, and song !

It is in his national songs and lyrics that Moore reaches his highest level. These breathe a true spirit of patriotism, a love of liberty, and a purity of emotion which appealed directly to the feelings and sentiments of his countrymen. In lightness, ease, and grace they are hardly excelled ; he is a true singer, with a varied range over the feelings and emotions. A tender note of melancholy is a prevailing element in his *Melodies*, as is seen in such examples as "The Meeting of the Waters," "Let Erin Remember," "The Minstrel Boy," "The Harp that once through Tara's Halls," etc. His note rings true and distinct in the following lines :—

Oft, in the stilly night,  
Ere Slumber's chain has bound me,  
Fond Memory brings the light  
Of other days around me. . . .  
I feel like one  
Who treads alone  
Some banquet-hall deserted,  
Whose lights are fled,  
Whose garlands dead  
And all but he departed.

And in the finest of all his songs there is an intense strain of melancholy, passion, and emotion :—

At the mid hour of night, when stars are weeping, I fly  
To the lone vale we lov'd, when life shone warm in thine eye ;  
And I think oft, if spirits can steal from the regions of air,  
To revisit past scenes of delight, thou wilt come to me there,  
And tell me our love is remember'd, even in the sky.

Then I sing the wild song 'twas once sweet pleasure to hear,  
When our voices commingling breath'd, like one, on the ear ;  
And, as echo far off through the vale my sad orison rolls,  
I think, oh my love ! 'tis thy voice from the kingdom of souls,  
Faintly answering still the notes that once were so dear.

There is a mastery of thought, expression, and rhythm in these stanzas seldom attained by Moore.



In 1811 Moore married Miss Dyke, an actress, and the union was one of great happiness. His career now became marked by great literary activity; in 1812 appeared *The Twopenny Post-Bag*, a number of letters supposed to be found in a lost bag; they form a series of sparkling and stinging satires, social and political, that have little point or interest for present-day readers.

23. **Lalla Rookh.**—In 1817 he published *Lalla Rookh* ("Tulip-Cheek"), a long narrative poem upon which he had been engaged for a considerable period. For this poem Messrs. Longmans had entered upon an agreement to pay £3,000 before they had read a line of it; such was the extent of the popularity to which Moore had risen, and the confidence of the publishers in his work. The poem, consisting of a series of four tales connected by a thread of narrative and romance, was at once popular, and increased Moore's reputation; it caught the public taste by the gorgeous setting and the Eastern splendour with which Moore enriched it. He read widely in order to get the local colouring, and in this respect he was successful; but the poem is forced, artificial, languid, and effeminate, and has little attraction for readers of to-day. Some years afterwards (1825) he sought in Eastern legend material for another narrative poem—*The Loves of the Angels*. Each of the three angels tells the story of how "For Woman's smile he lost the skies"; but the lack of Miltonic power to rise above the impossibility of the incidents, and the want of human interest in the tales, rank the poem far below *Lalla Rookh*.

In 1818 Moore published *The Fudge Family in Paris*, another series of letters in which he freely satirises the Tory party, and gives a graphic description of Paris under the returned Royalists. Moore wrote a number of prose works: the *Lives* of Byron, Sheridan, and Lord Edward Fitzgerald; and *The Epicurean*, an interesting novel which tells of the conversion to Christianity of a young epicurean philosopher, Alciphron, and the martyrdom of his beloved Alethe in Egypt. The biography of Byron marked a new departure in its method, as in it Moore made the fullest use of the Byron correspondence and allowed it to speak for itself. In 1835 Moore received a pension of £300 a

year; he died in 1852, and was buried at Bromham, near Devizes.

24. **Samuel Rogers** (1763—1855) is an interesting figure in the literary history of an exceptionally brilliant period. He was himself a poet, a man of cultivated aesthetic tastes, and he possessed great wealth wherewith to satisfy them. His poetry, in sentiment, feeling, and style, belongs, like Campbell's, to the pseudo-classic school of the eighteenth century. His first most important work was *The Pleasures of Memory*, in rimed-heroic metre, published in 1792, which he took nine years to write. It is more than an echo of Goldsmith, as the following lines show:—

Twilight's soft dews steal o'er the village green,  
With magic tints to harmonise the scene,  
Still is the hum that through the hamlet broke,  
When round the ruins of their ancient oak  
The peasants flock to hear the minstrel play,  
And games and cards closed the busy day.

In the same style is *Human Life* (1819), which also took nine years to write. In 1814 he published *Jacqueline*, a tale in verse issued with Byron's *Lara* in one thin volume. Of his *Italy*, a poem in blank verse, which took sixteen years to compose, the first part appeared in 1822. His poetry is that of a man of taste, refinement, and culture; and these qualities go their full length in making up for his want of true inspiration. Rogers was a most generous patron of struggling genius, and of wide benevolence to all claims upon his charity. He was a warm friend to all the great literary men of his time, and no other man of that period could claim so long and so wide an acquaintance. Of himself he says:—

Nature denied him much,  
But gave him at his birth what most he valued :  
A passionate love for music, sculpture, painting,  
For poetry, the language of the gods,  
For all things here.

25. **Thomas Campbell** (1777—1844), a poet of great eminence in his own day, has suffered an eclipse in reputation; the greater portion of his work, with that of Rogers, belongs, as we have said, to the more formal late eighteenth-century period. Campbell

was born in Glasgow, the son of a merchant, and educated at the University of that city. He achieved a reputation as a student for his translation of passages from the Greek poets; and in his twenty-second year he published his *Pleasures of Hope*, four editions of which were exhausted in a year. In addition to £60 for his poem, and £50 for each successive re-issue, he received from the sales of a quarto edition in 1803 about £1000; these were the largest sums obtained for a single work of the kind up to that time. There was nothing new in the subject or treatment of *The Pleasures of Hope*: it dealt with the French Revolution, the capture of Warsaw, the African slave trade—the whole mixed with much abstract philosophising. But the grace, ease, and melody of the verse, its lofty sentiment and passionate appeals to noble instincts, made the poem a success. It has, however, all the faults of the late eighteenth-century school; it is at times inflated and rhetorical, with an occasional distortion of language, which called forth a severe criticism from Wordsworth. The brilliant description of the "Downfall of Poland" was of itself sufficient to popularise the poem, from which the following lines are taken:—

The sun went down, nor ceased the carnage there,  
Tumultuous Murder shook the midnight air—  
On Prague's proud arch the fires of ruin glow,  
His blood-dyed waters murmuring far below;  
The storm prevails, the ramparts yield away,  
Bursts the wild cry of horror and dismay!  
Hark, as the smouldering piles with thunder fall,  
A thousand shrieks for hopeless mercy call!  
Earth shook—red meteors flashed along the sky,  
And conscious Nature shuddered at the cry!

In 1800 Campbell took an extended tour on the Continent, and the scenes and incidents of his journey inspired several of his finest short poems, such as *Hohenlinden*, *The Exile of Erin*, *Ye Mariners of England*, and *The Battle of the Baltic*. He settled in London in 1803, and devoted himself entirely to literature. Three years later he received a pension of £200 a year; and in 1809 he published *Gertrude of Wyoming*, a narrative of Indian life written in the Spenserian stanza. Though a more mature work, this has less interest than *The Pleasures of Hope*, and has no passage

so striking as that referring to Poland in the latter poem. The following lines are an example of the style:—

The mute Oneyda took  
His calumet<sup>1</sup> of peace and cup of joy;  
As monumental bronze unchanged his look;  
A soul that pity touched, but never shook;  
Trained from his tree-rocked cradle to his bier,  
The fierce extreme of good and ill to brook  
Impassive—fearing but the shame of fear—  
A stoic of the woods—a man without a tear.

Campbell also published *Specimens from the British Poets*, to which he contributed able and suggestive criticisms. Other works followed: *Theodric* (1824), and *The Pilgrim of Glencoe* (1842), poems which added nothing to his reputation; the romantic poetry of Scott and Byron had created a taste that rejected the formal and insipid poetry of the decadent eighteenth-century school. In 1827 Campbell was elected Lord Rector of Glasgow University, being chosen in preference to Sir Walter Scott; and the rare honour of re-election was shown him in the two following years. He died in Boulogne (1844) and was buried in Westminster Abbey, his funeral being attended by a number of Polish nobles, one of whom poured on his coffin earth taken from the grave of Kosciusko.

Campbell's lyric poems are, notwithstanding some defects, among the noblest and most spirited in the language. In the use of metaphors and striking illustrations he was usually singularly happy. The reader's sensibility to any defect is lost in the martial ring and trumpet sound of his battle-pieces; and in these war lyrics Campbell has no serious rival among English poets. The following stanzas are from one of his less known lyrics:—

Men of England! who inherit  
Rights that cost your sires their blood!  
Men whose undegenerate spirit  
Has been proved on land and flood.  
\* \* \* \* \*  
Yours are Hampden's, Russell's glory,  
Sidney's matchless shade is yours,—  
Martyrs in heroic story,  
Worth a hundred Agincourts!

<sup>1</sup> A kind of pipe used by the North American Indians.



We're the sons of sires that baffled  
 Crown'd and mitred tyranny ;—  
 They defied the field and scaffold  
 For their birthrights—so will we !

26. **James Hogg** (1770—1835) is, like Burns, another remarkable instance of poetic genius ripening among the Scottish peasantry. He was born in the parish of Ettrick in Selkirkshire, and became known as the "Ettrick Shepherd," and sat as such in Wilson's *Noctes Ambrosianae* (see p. 487). As a child he learned to read, and no more ; but his mother fed his fancy with folk-tales ; as he grew up, he taught himself a good deal, and he was, too, a keen and constant observer of nature. While in Edinburgh in 1801, selling his master's sheep, he published a volume of poems ; but the book was not a success. Hogg was a great collector of Scottish tales and ballads, and he helped Sir Walter Scott in collecting material for the *Border Minstrelsy*. In succeeding years he tried various farming and literary ventures with small success ; but in 1813 appeared his best work, *The Queen's Wake*. It is a series of ballads and tales, connected by a thread of narrative, and supposed to be sung by Scottish bards who are brought together at Holyrood<sup>1</sup> to a royal wake. A number of works followed in rapid succession, and Hogg became a well-known figure in the literary circles of Edinburgh, a contributor to *Blackwood* and a friend of Scott. He was a poet of fancy and imagination, with great fertility, and a freshness and wildness of note that sprang from direct contact with nature. "Kilmeny," a part of *The Queen's Wake*, is, as Matthew Arnold said, "drenched in magic." The following lines are taken from it :—

Bonny Kilmeny gaed up the glen ;  
 But it wasna to meet Duncraig's men. . . .  
 When many a day had come and fled,  
 When grief grew calm, and hope was dead,  
 When mass for Kilmeny's soul had been sung,  
 When the beadsman<sup>2</sup> had prayed and the dead-bell rung . . .  
 Late, late, in the gloamin',<sup>3</sup> Kilmeny came home.

<sup>1</sup> An abbey and ancient royal palace of Scotland, situated in Edinburgh.

<sup>2</sup> Formerly in Scotland a public alms-man ; one who received alms from the King, and was expected in return to pray for the King's welfare, and that of his people. See Introduction to Scott's *Antiquary*.

<sup>3</sup> twilight.

27. **Allan Cunningham** (1784—1842) was born in Dumfries-shire, the son of a gardener, who afterwards became a land steward. As a boy he was for a time apprenticed to his uncle, a mason and builder; but he subsequently went to London and began to work for newspapers. He became clerk of the works to Chantrey, the famous sculptor, but found time to pursue his literary tastes, and wrote a large number of poems in the style of the old Scots ballads, thoroughly national and original. He was also a voluminous prose writer, and published among novels and other works *The Lives of Eminent British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* in six volumes. He also published the collected works of Burns, and a biography of the poet. In such songs as the following Cunningham is thoroughly Scottish in style and feeling:—

Red rows<sup>1</sup> the Nith 'tween bank and brae<sup>2</sup>  
 Mirk<sup>3</sup> is the night and rainie O,  
 Though heaven and earth should mix in storm,  
 I'll gang to see my Nanie O;  
 My Nanie O, my Nanie O;  
 My kind and winsome Nanie O,  
 She holds my heart in love's dear bands,  
 And none can do't but Nanie O.

In the stirring verses of "A wet sheet and a flowing sea," he has made an excellent contribution to British sea songs; while in the following extract from an exiled Jacobite's lament, the poet strikes a note of tenderest pathos:—

When the flower is i' the bud and the leaf is on the tree,  
 The larks shall sing me hame in my ain countrie.  
 Hame, hame, hame, hame fain wad I be,  
 O! hame, hame, hame, to my ain countrie.

\* \* \* \* \*

The great are now gane, a' wha ventured to save,  
 The new grass is springing on the top of their grave;  
 But the sun thro' the mirk blinks blythe in my ee,  
 "I'll shine on ye yet in yere ain countrie."

Hame, hame, hame, hame fain wad I be,  
 Hame, hame, hame, to my ain countrie!

28. A number of minor poets, many of whom were celebrated in their own time, claim mention in any notice of this period. **William Lisle Bowles** (1762—1850) is now known only for his *Sonnets*, which stimulated Coleridge's poetic genius. **George Canning** (1770—1827), the celebrated

<sup>1</sup> rolls.

<sup>2</sup> hill.

<sup>3</sup> dark.

statesman, was a brilliant contributor to *The Anti-Jacobin Review*; his *Needy Knife-Grinder* is still remembered. **James Montgomery** (1771—1854) was a prolific writer, and among his works noted in his own day were *The West Indies*, *Greenland*, and *The Pelican Island*. He must not be confounded with **Robert Montgomery**, now only remembered by Macaulay's slashing essay on his poems in *The Edinburgh Review*. **Robert Tannahill** (1774—1810) is among the best of the minor lyric poets of Scotland. His *Braes o' Balquither*, *Gloomy Winter's now Awa'*, *The Braes o' Gleniffer*, and *The Flower of Dumblane* are well known. **James Smith** (1775—1839) and his brother, **Horace Smith** (1779—1849), were noted for their *Rejected Addresses*, among the very best parodies in English; in these they brilliantly imitated the leading poets of the day—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Byron, Scott, Moore, and others. The *Address to a Mummy*, by Horace Smith, is a well-known poem, written in a semi-serious vein. **Bryan Procter Waller** (1787—1874), better known as "Barry Cornwall," was a noted verse writer of the "Cockney School," and is now only remembered by some of his songs. **Sir Aubrey Hunt De Vere** (1788—1846), an Irishman of Adare, co. Limerick, was a friend of Wordsworth, and is noted for his dramatic poem *Julian the Apostate*, and his drama *Mary Tudor*, his finest work. **Charles Wolfe** (1791—1823), also an Irishman, is noted for his splendid poem, *The Burial of Sir John Moore*.

**Felicia Hemans** (1793—1835) is an example of a very marked decline in popular estimation. She was a voluminous verse writer, chiefly of the mild domestic kind. She has a certain grace and ease, but her work lacks passion and power, and, as Scott well said, her poetry has "too many flowers for the fruit."

**Hartley Coleridge** (1796—1849), the eldest son of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, was a Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, but drifted through life trying various literary and other ventures. In poetry he was a disciple of Wordsworth, and has been called "The Laureate of Childhood." His *Lives of the Northern Worthies* is a notable contribution to biographical literature. Hartley Coleridge was buried close to the body of Wordsworth in Grasmere churchyard. "And," says Professor Dowden, "hard by a stream goes murmuring to the lake. As a mountain rivulet to a mountain lake, so is Hartley Coleridge's poetry to that of Wordsworth; and the stream has a melodious life and a freshness of its own." The following stanza of a song is an example of his fresh and delicate work:—

She is not fair to outward view  
As many maidens be;  
Her loveliness I never knew  
Until she smiled on me.  
O then I saw her eye was bright,  
A well of love, a spring of light.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE NEW ESSAYISTS.

1. **The Reviews: The Edinburgh.**—The work of the new essayists is intimately connected with the establishment of the great periodical reviews, *The Edinburgh*, *The Quarterly*, and others. The essayists of the Augustan Age had given birth to the germ of these periodicals in *The Spectator* and *Tatler*; but the channel which their activities had found in political and social sketches had soon been occupied—in one direction by the political pamphlet, to be succeeded by the daily newspaper; in another by the works of the great novelists and their successors. On the other hand, the growth of a new literature and the extension of the area of the reading public had increased the demand for literary criticism; while the spread of information had multiplied the class fitted to discharge this function. The first to take advantage of the new state of things was a young Scotch printer and publisher named Constable. He established in 1802 *The Edinburgh Review*, a publication destined to exercise enormous influence on the literature of the nineteenth century. Constable attracted to himself a band of able writers headed by Francis (afterwards Lord) Jeffrey, Henry (afterwards Lord) Brougham, Sydney Smith, and others, who speedily assured the recognition of the new venture as a great power in literature.

"The effect," says Lord Cockburn, "was electrical. It is impossible for those who did not live at the time and in the heart of the scene to feel, or almost to understand, the impression made by the new luminary, or the anxiety with which its motions were observed. . . . The learning of the new journal, its talent, its spirit, its writing, and its independence, were all new; and the surprise was increased by a work so full of public life springing up suddenly in a (then) remote part of the kingdom."



2. **The Chief Writers.**—The leading spirit of the new review was **Francis Jeffrey** (1773—1850). An ardent temperament and restless mind were housed in a puny and insignificant frame; brilliant in style, fearless in expression, but too severe and scathing in his opinions, he was often mistaken in his estimate of new writers, being especially prone to political prejudice; but on the whole Jeffrey showed considerable soundness of literary judgment.

Southey, indeed, alarmed and hurt by the onslaught on Wordsworth and the Lake School, says, "Of Judge Jeffrey of *The Edinburgh Review*, I must ever think and speak as of a bad politician, a worse moralist, and a critic in matters of taste equally incompetent and unjust." On the other hand, the misanthropic Carlyle, in telling of his first interview with the "Arch-critic," declares: "My feeling with him was that of unembarrassment; a reasonable, veracious little man, I could perceive, with whom any truth one felt good to utter would have a fair chance."

A very different type of man was **Sydney Smith** (1771—1845). An erudite Oxford clergyman, caustic in his judgments on occasions, but genial in his disposition and witty in his conversation, he is described by Macaulay as "the greatest master of ridicule that has appeared among us since Swift." Smith was the consistent upholder of anonymity in criticism, but, as a set-off, has had more jokes and humorous anecdotes fathered on him than even the great Dean himself. This able and trenchant writer deserves a place in any history of English literature, not only as one of the founders of *The Edinburgh Review*, but for the wit and humour of his own writings. He was born at Woodford, in Essex, the son of an eccentric gentleman, who managed to wreck his own fortune and yet to give his sons a liberal education. Sydney Smith, after gaining a fellowship at New College, Oxford, took orders, and obtained a small curacy in the middle of Salisbury Plain. In the year 1802 he met Jeffrey, Brougham, and some other young men of liberal views, and they resolved on founding a new review, and *The Edinburgh* was the important result of their resolution; the first number, Smith tells us, was edited by him. He went to London in 1804, where he became a well-known figure in society; and in 1831, his friends the Whigs being now in power, he was made Canon of St. Paul's. He wrote a large

number of essays and lectures on moral philosophy; but his best, or at least his best known, work is *Peter Plymley's Letters*, the subject of which was Catholic Emancipation. The book had an immense sale; twenty-one editions were issued, and not since the days of Swift had the British public been able to read arguments of such force combined with irony so trenchant. The freedom, independence, and geniality of his character were reflected in his writings. His wit was the vehicle of strong common sense: the wit illumined the common sense, the common sense gave strength to the wit; and the indivisible combination was the strongest political force in the early part of the nineteenth century. Smith's sentences are generally short; and his English is always clear and simple.

The third member of this literary confederacy was **Henry Brougham** (1779—1868), a young Scotch advocate of boisterous spirits and wide reading, who contributed to *The Review* numerous articles, mainly on scientific and economic subjects; but his reviews were often both superficial and unjust, and he was singularly jealous of other contributors. He became, however, a leading writer for the English Whig press, and entered Parliament in 1810 as member for Camelford, rose to be Lord Chancellor, and was created Baron Brougham and Vaux. He was a voluminous writer on politics, popular philosophy, and biography; but is best known through his efforts for the abolition of slavery and for his advocacy of the cause of the unfortunate Queen Caroline, wife of George IV.

3. **The Quarterly Review.**—The unsparing criticisms of *The Edinburgh Review*, and its undisguised political bias, soon created a strong party of men of letters and statesmen keenly antagonistic to its views, who eagerly desired to launch some venture to counteract its influence and dispute the literary dictatorship which *The Edinburgh* seemed in a fair way to establish. So early as 1807 John Murray, already well known as an enterprising publisher, wrote on this subject to George Canning, a rising Tory statesman, who had been one of the founders, in 1797, of the short-lived *Anti-Jacobin Review*. In this letter he proposes the starting of an opposition journal, which, however, he admits to be a hopeless task without the active co-operation of members of the Ministry. This

led to the introduction to John Murray of William Gifford, who had been editor for Canning of *The Anti-Jacobin*. But the high-handed injudiciousness of Jeffrey and his contributors was now to supply from their own ranks the most effective ally that the new journal could hope to secure. Walter Scott had been an early and regular contributor to the pages of *The Edinburgh*, but an unjust and unfriendly review of *Marmion*, followed by an article which offended all his most cherished political convictions, completely alienated that powerful partisan, who threw himself wholly, with characteristic vigour and good sense, into the project of "instituting a review in London . . . on a plan as liberal as that of *The Edinburgh*, its literature as well supported, and its principles English and constitutional." Under these favourable auspices *The Quarterly Review* was launched in February, 1809, under the editorship of Gifford.

**William Gifford** (1757—1826), the chief figure on the staff of the new *Quarterly*, was born of very poor parents at Ashburton, in Devonshire. Puny and slightly deformed through an accident in childhood, and early left an orphan, he was treated with cruel neglect by an unsympathetic guardian, who sent him as a ship-boy on a coasting vessel, and afterwards apprenticed him to a shoemaker. It was only in his twentieth year that by the kindness of a country surgeon Gifford's education really began, but in two years' time he had obtained a Bible clerkship at Exeter College, Oxford. Here he studied Greek, Latin, French, and Spanish, and translated the *Satires* of Juvenal.<sup>1</sup> In the year 1794 he published *The Baviad* and *The Maeviad*,<sup>2</sup> satires in imitation of Persius,<sup>3</sup> in which he attacked what was known as the "Della Cruscan<sup>4</sup> School" of poetry, the leaders of which were Mrs. Piozzi

<sup>1</sup> Decimus Junius Juvenalis, the most notable of Latin satirists, who flourished under Trajan, *circa* 100 A.D.

<sup>2</sup> *Baviad* and *Maeviad* from Bavius and Maeivius, two Latin poets satirised by Virgil.

<sup>3</sup> Aulus Persius Flaccus, a Latin satirist, born 34 A.D., died 62 A.D.

<sup>4</sup> Accademia della Crusca. An academy founded at Florence in 1582 with the object of purifying the Italian language. The new "Della Cruscan School" originally met in Florence about 1785; Robert Merry assumed the pseudonym of "Della Crusca," Mrs. Hannah Cowley that of "Anna Matilda"—a sobriquet which has become a synonym for nanby-pamby verse and sentimental fiction.

(once Mrs. Thrale, the friend of Dr. Johnson), Hannah Cowley, Bertie Greathead, and Robert Merry. In 1797 Gifford became editor of *The Anti-Jacobin*, and in 1809 assumed the editorship of *The Quarterly*, which post he held for fifteen years, only resigning it through increasing ill-health in 1824. In 1826 he died; and, on the application of his friends, was buried in Westminster Abbey, under the monuments of Camden and Garrick.

Another of the contributors who added much to the success of *The Quarterly* was **George Ellis** (1745—1815). The son of a West Indian planter, he early engaged in literature, and filled some minor diplomatic posts on the Continent. He published in 1790 *Specimens of Early English Poetry*, which went through six editions, and in 1805 he followed it up by *Specimens of Early English Romances*. On *The Quarterly* he acted as intermediary between the editor and Canning, and wrote many articles himself, including reviews of the principal poems of Byron and of Sir Walter Scott.

4. **Blackwood's Magazine.**—The year 1817 saw the establishment of yet another periodical, a monthly magazine started under the title of *The Edinburgh*; but that was soon after changed by its publisher, and the periodical received the well-known name of *Blackwood's Magazine*. The seventh number contained a savage attack on Coleridge, and an equally vigorous onslaught by Lockhart on what, in the person of Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, and others, came to be known as the "Cockney School." In it also appeared the extraordinary and somewhat libellous production called *A Translation from an Ancient Chaldee Manuscript*. This, while adopting the language of the Bible, and professing to be a recently discovered Eastern manuscript, satirised Jeffrey and all that was best known in Edinburgh Whig circles, and described its own contributors in metaphorical language, often none too complimentary. For instance, the then little known J. G. Lockhart appears therein as "the scorpion from a far country, which delighteth to sting the faces of men"; the publisher himself was referred to as one whose name "was, as it had been, the colour of *ebony*," which long gave the title of "Old Ebony" to the journal. This remarkable article was almost entirely drafted by James Hogg, but the



leading spirit in the new publication was **John Wilson** (1785—1854), best known under his *nom-de-plume* of "Christopher North," who remained a notable contributor to its pages for a quarter of a century. Born at Paisley, the son of a wealthy manufacturer, and educated at Glasgow and at Magdalen College, Oxford, where he carried off the Newdigate Prize for English poetry, he conceived a warm admiration for Wordsworth and the "Lake School." Desirous to cultivate an intimacy with Wordsworth, he accordingly settled at Elleray, on Lake Windermere; but having lost the whole of his patrimony, he removed to Edinburgh in 1815, where he was called to the Scottish Bar, and received with open arms by the cultured society of the city. Christopher North had a striking personal appearance, and the *Chaldee Manuscript*, in the writing of which he bore no small part, alludes to him as "the beautiful leopard from the valley of the palm-trees" (in allusion to his first poem, *The Isle of Palms*, 1812), "whose going forth was comely as the greyhound." His best known articles are the *Noctes Ambrosianae*, a series of imaginary dialogues in a tavern held between the author, "Morgan O'Dogherty" (Dr. Maginn), the "Ettrick Shepherd" (James Hogg), and other boon companions, the rollicking fun of which jars somewhat on the taste of a more decorous age, while the wealth of personal allusions to characters now unknown, save by the notes of the commentator, acts as a deterrent to the average reader of to-day. He also wrote *Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life* and *The Trials of Margaret Lindsay*. Wilson was appointed Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh in 1820, and continued one of the most remarkable figures of Edinburgh society till his death in 1854.

Of the other writers who founded the reputation of *Blackwood's*, the next in order of importance to Christopher North is **John Gibson Lockhart** (1794—1854). The future son-in-law and biographer of Sir Walter Scott was the son of a Lanarkshire minister, and, like Wilson, was educated at Glasgow and Oxford. On leaving the University Lockhart became an advocate at Edinburgh, where he made the acquaintance of John Wilson, and the two were amongst the first contributors to *Blackwood*. His earliest notable publication was the novel *Valerius* (1821), one of the most

successful of the many tales of the life of the early Christians in Rome; this was followed up in 1822 by the powerful and tragic work called *Adam Blair*. After a short interval from Gifford's resignation, Lockhart accepted the editorship of *The Quarterly*, at a salary of £1,000 a year, with payment for any articles which he might himself contribute. In this post his undoubted literary taste and discernment were of the greatest value, and he continued to edit the *Review* till his death in 1854—a period of twenty-eight years. In 1822 he published a *Life of Napoleon*, which formed the first work in the series of Murray's "Family Library"; and in 1837-8 appeared his *Life of Scott*, "one of the best biographies," says the late Dr. Smiles, "in the whole range of English literature," "and," he adds, "perhaps never was a more faithful memorial erected, in the shape of a book, to the beauty, goodness, and faithfulness of a noble literary character."

5. **Fraser's Magazine.**—The name of **William Maginn** (1793—1842) has already been mentioned in connection with the *Noctes Ambrosianae*; but he is best known as the founder, in 1830, of *Fraser's Magazine*, named from his friend Hugh Fraser—not, as is often supposed, from the publisher James Fraser. Maginn was a typical specimen of the Irish man of letters, and is supposed to have been the original of Thackeray's Captain Shandon; and though not the editor of the new magazine, was nevertheless its moving spirit. Some of his countrymen rallied round him, notably **Thomas Crofton Croker** (1798—1854), author of *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland*, and **Francis Mahony** (1804—1866), better known as "Father Prout," the author of the *Reliques*, full of learned fooling which delighted the readers of his own day, and may still be read with pleasure. Carlyle, Thackeray, Coleridge, and Southey were also amongst the contributors to *Fraser's Magazine*.

6. **William Godwin** (1756—1836).—We have seen how Lockhart had delivered in an early number of *Blackwood* an onslaught on what he termed the "Cockney School," thereby characterising a little group of writers, so far aptly designated in that they were all unpretentious dwellers in London, but one which was by no means deserving of the scorn implied in the epithet. The first, though

not the greatest of these, is William Godwin, who was born at Wisbech, in Cambridgeshire, the son of a dissenting minister. In his twenty-third year he obtained pastoral charge of a congregation, whom he left owing to a difference of opinion on a question of Church discipline. Godwin was totally unfitted to have charge of any congregation, for he had already imbibed atheistical ideas, and in 1788 he came to London to adopt the career of a man of letters and writer for the reviews. Here he made the acquaintance of **John Wolcott** (1738—1819), better known as "Peter Pindar," who had exchanged the profession of medicine for the Church, which he again deserted for his original calling, adding to it that of a writer of political lampoons, wherein the reigning monarch, George III., was successfully caricatured. Godwin soon found more congenial companions in Ritson, the editor of early songs and ballads, William Hazlitt, and Leigh Hunt. To this circle the French Revolution was the dawn of infinite promise, and they formed themselves into a Revolutionary Club, which corresponded with the French leaders, but took no steps to emulate their actions. Some of the members were, however, indicted for high treason, though Godwin was not included amongst them. He was quietly engaged on the preparation of a work which he hoped would revolutionise society, politically and socially, and which he issued in 1793 under the title of *An Inquiry concerning Political Justice*. The following year he published the novel by which he is best known, *The Adventures of Caleb Williams*, a powerful but painful tale of a hidden crime, its discovery by one under bonds of gratitude to its perpetrator, and the persecution of the innocent possessor of the secret by his guilty benefactor. The sentiment is strained and unnatural in the highest degree; and the object of the novel seems to be the denunciation of legal punishments for crime, as calculated to act less as deterrents from, than as inducements to, the commission of further misdeeds, in order to escape the consequences of a first offence. Godwin wrote other novels which are now practically forgotten. In 1797 he married **Mary Wollstonecraft**, author of the *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, and their daughter, Mary Godwin, married Percy Bysshe Shelley. Godwin

died in 1836, having held, strangely enough, for some years before his death a sinecure office under Government.

B 7. A much greater name in literature is that of **Charles Lamb** (1775—1834). Youngest of seven children, of whom two alone then survived, Charles was born in 1775 in Crown Office Row, within the precincts of the Temple, and seems to have imbibed in his early childhood the peaceful and scholarly tone of his surroundings. His father was a barrister's clerk, and is commemorated in the essay on the *Old Benchers of the Inner Temple* under the name of "Lovel." In 1782 Charles procured a presentation to Christ's Hospital, where he became the friend of Coleridge, of whom he has given us some interesting reminiscences, with many personal autobiographical details of his school life. Coleridge, as usual with those with whom he came in contact, exercised a powerful influence on his young schoolfellow, in moulding his taste in literature and fostering his aspirations to become a man of letters. In his fifteenth year Lamb was removed from Christ's Hospital, to take up a clerkship in the South Sea House, from which he was promoted, three years later, to a post in the accountant's office of the East India Company. In September, 1796, occurred the great tragedy in the life of the family. Mary Lamb, ten years the senior of Charles, in a fit of sudden insanity stabbed her invalid mother to the heart with a table-knife, and severely wounded the childish old man her father. In this crisis Lamb acted with noble generosity. He determined to devote one-third of their income (£180 a year) to his sister's maintenance in a private asylum, so as to avert the necessity of her being committed to Bedlam.<sup>1</sup> His father soon passed away, and Lamb was enabled to arrange for his sister's returning to live with him, he becoming responsible for her safe custody; and though successive attacks obliged her from time to time to return to the asylum, she continued, in her lucid intervals, to reside with her devoted brother until his death, surviving him by thirteen years.

<sup>1</sup> Bedlam is a corruption of Bethlehem. The hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem at Bishopsgate was originally founded in 1247 as a priory, and used as a lunatic asylum since 1472; it was transferred to Lambeth in 1838.



8. **His Literary Career.**—Early in 1796 Lamb made his earliest appearance in print by furnishing four sonnets to Coleridge's first volume of poems, published by Cottle of Bristol; and he made a further contribution of poems to the second edition of Coleridge's volume, which appeared in 1797. Next year Lamb published *Rosamund Gray*, a prose tale, or "miniature romance" as it was called, of inflated style and improbable construction, which nevertheless afterwards obtained the warm approbation of Shelley. In 1800 Lamb and his sister moved to rooms in Mitre Court Buildings, and he thus again became a dweller in the Temple, within whose precincts he remained nearly eighteen years. He now commenced a humble connection with journalism, furnishing to *The Morning Post* and other newspapers amusing paragraphs, at the rate of about a penny a line. These labours did not preclude the idea of more ambitious efforts, and already in 1799 he had written, in blank verse, his drama of *John Woodvil*, which was refused at Drury Lane. In 1806 he produced the farce entitled *Mr. H.*, which was accepted by the management of Drury Lane, but emphatically rejected at its first performance by the audience, Lamb himself, it is said, leading the hisses. He was now, however, to find more congenial work in assisting Mary Lamb with the *Tales from Shakespeare*, which reached a second edition the year after their publication, and speedily became a classic. Of these Charles contributed *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Hamlet*. Their success induced Lamb to produce a version of the *Odyssey* suitable for children, and the result, *The Adventures of Ulysses*, founded on Chapman's translation of Homer (see p. 166), was eminently satisfactory. This again led to Lamb's very important contribution to nineteenth-century literature—the *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets contemporary with Shakespeare*, a task which he loved, and one for which no man was better fitted, steeped as he was in the work of the Elizabethan dramatists. It should be remembered that in 1808, when the *Specimens* appeared, Coleridge had not begun his *Lectures*, and Hazlitt's *Essays* were still things of the future, and that no such criticism as Lamb's commentary, modestly referred to by him as "notes," had at that time been given to the public. The revival of the study of the old dramatists, with all

its far-reaching effects on the literature of the last century, is thus directly attributable to the influence and genius of Charles Lamb.

9. **The Essays of Elia.**—But Lamb was yet to find the fittest field for the exercise of those powers for which his previous efforts had been but the training. In 1820 appeared yet another monthly journal with the title, taken from an earlier periodical, of *The London Magazine*. Its object was to be largely critical; its staff of contributors contained many brilliant names, from Keats to Carlyle; but it was not a financial success. In one of its early numbers, however, appeared *Recollections of the South Sea House*. This was given over the signature of "Elia," a name borrowed by Lamb from an Italian fellow clerk of thirty years back, and it is the first of the immortal *Essays of Elia*. For over two years scarcely a month passed without the appearance in *The London Magazine* of one of these essays, for which the author drew largely on his personal experiences and acquaintances, though they also include such *jeux d'esprit* as the *Dissertation on Roast Pork* and the essay on *Grace before Meat*. He was released, in 1825, from "the dry drudgery of the desk's dead wood," as he alliteratively terms his office work, with a pension, handsome under the circumstances, of £450 a year. For the last eight years of his life Lamb accomplished little, except a series of essays entitled *Popular Fallacies*. His sister's illnesses grew more frequent and of longer duration; death had removed many of his old friends; and the decease of Coleridge in the summer of 1834 seems to have proved a final blow. It is on record that in conversation he would suddenly exclaim, "Coleridge is dead!" On December 27th he passed away, murmuring the names of his many friends, and "without a single foe." No epitaph could be fitter for him than the lines written by the Rev. Henry F. Cary (1772—1844), the translator of Dante, who had had returned by Lamb, shortly before his death, a volume with the leaf turned down at the account of Sir Philip Sidney:—

So should it be, my gentle friend;  
Thy leaf last closed at Sidney's end.  
Thou too, like Sidney, would'st have given  
The water, thirsting and near heaven;

Nay, were it wine filled to the brim,  
Thou had'st looked hard, but given, like him.

\* \* \* \* \*  
'Tis done; and thou hast joined a crew,  
To whom thy soul was justly due;  
And yet I think, where'er thou be,  
They'll scarcely love thee more than we.

10. **His Work.**—The humour of Charles Lamb was unique in English literature, as it was also in English society. It is delicate, subtle, refined, with a quaint fancy and a personal note that varies momentarily from tender pathos to rippling merriment. In his *Essays* he is an egotist, but "an egotist," says Canon Ainger, "without a touch of vanity or self-assertion, without a grain of envy or ill-nature." Lamb's fame, moreover, rests upon the fineness and subtlety of his criticism, criticism which in his hands rises to the dignity of a fine art. There are few things in literature so noble, or so profound, as his analyses of the characters of Hamlet and Lear in the famous essay on *Shakespeare's Tragedies*. He is as delicate and refined in his poetry as in his prose. His "nose gay of verse may be held by the small hand of a maiden, and there is not in it one flaunting, gallant flower," says Professor Dowden. His poems, such as *The Old Familiar Faces*, like his essays, show his gentle heart, his sweet and subtle humour, his perfect humanity, and his fine courtesy. The following lines are an example of his verses:—

#### HESTER.

When maidens such as Hester die,  
Their place we may not well supply,  
Though ye among a thousand try  
    With vain endeavour,  
A month or more hath she been dead,  
Yet cannot I by force be led  
To think upon the wormy bed,  
    And her together.

\* \* \* \* \*  
My sprightly neighbour, gone before  
To that unknown and silent shore,  
Shall we not meet, as heretofore,  
    Some summer morning,  
When from thy cheerful eye a ray  
Hath struck a bliss upon the day—  
A bliss that would not go away,  
    A sweet forewarning?

To select from the *Essays of Elia* is almost an impossible task, for not one of them can be said to be typical of Lamb, and yet in another sense all are typical. As the essayist's mood varied continually, so also did his style; "his manner," says Canon Ainger, "is seldom in two essays quite the same." Therefore it is that each essay is in its own way inimitable; each is a jewel of its kind with its proper place and value in the chaplet of prose. In *Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist*, the *Dissertation on Roast Pork*, and the essay on *Grace before Meat*, already alluded to, as also in the essays on *The Superannuated Man* and *Imperfect Sympathies* (which begins "I have been trying all my life to like Scotchmen and am obliged to desist from the experiment in despair"), will be found a fair representation of Lamb's style, and of his delicate and subtle humour. The following passage, from the essay on *Mackery End in Hertfordshire*, is of interest as containing a portrait of his sister (under the disguised name of Bridget Elia):—

I must touch upon the foibles of my kinswoman with a gentle hand, for Bridget does not like to be told of her faults. She hath an awkward trick (to say no worse of it) of reading in company: at which time she will answer *yes* or *no* to a question, without fully understanding its purport—which is provoking, and derogatory in the highest degree to the dignity of the putter of the said question. Her presence of mind is equal to the most pressing trials of life, but will sometimes desert her upon trifling occasions. When the purpose requires it, and is a thing of moment, she can speak to it greatly; but in matters which are not stuff of the conscience, she hath been known sometimes to let slip a word less seasonably.

Her education in youth was not much attended to; and she happily missed all that train of female garniture which passeth by the name of accomplishments. She was tumbled early, by accident or design, into a spacious closet of good old English reading, without much selection or prohibition, and browsed at will upon that fair and wholesome pasturage. Had I twenty girls, they should be brought up exactly in this fashion. I know not whether their chance in wedlock might not be diminished by it, but I can answer for it that it makes (if the worst come to the worst) most incomparable old maids.

**II. William Hazlitt** (1778—1830), one of the most eminent critics and essayists of his age, was born at Maidstone, the son of a Unitarian minister of Irish extraction. His father settled at Wem, in Shropshire; and William was educated there, partly at a neighbouring school, but chiefly at home. In the year 1798, when Hazlitt was twenty, he met Coleridge, who took him over to



Alfoxden, near Nether Stowey, and introduced him to Wordsworth. In 1808 Hazlitt married a Miss Stoddart, and three years later he removed to London to follow a literary career. Here he made the acquaintance—an acquaintance which quickly ripened into friendship—of Charles Lamb. The gentle-hearted humorist had a great liking and real admiration for Hazlitt, but would have been glad to see in him “something of a better temper and a smoother head of hair.” For many years Hazlitt contributed to *The Edinburgh Review*, and in 1817 he published his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*. These were really discourses on life and human nature, written with an honest enthusiasm and an overflowing ardour. Next year he gave a course of lectures on the English poets, which he afterwards brought out in book form. His *Lectures on the English Comic Writers* were delivered and published the year after. One of his most important works, *Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, appeared in 1821. At this time he also produced two volumes of *Table Talk; or, Original Essays*. These essays contain a great deal of vigorous thinking, eloquent writing, and pleasant reminiscences of his earlier days. Hazlitt was fiercely attacked by *Blackwood* and other Tory journals; but fifteen years later Professor Wilson (Christopher North) made amends in the words, “The animosities are mortal; the humanities live for ever.” In 1826 appeared his *Opinions on Books, Men, and Things*, which consists of essays on a large variety of subjects written in Hazlitt's brightest and most attractive manner. His largest, but by no means his greatest work, is his *Life of Napoleon Buonaparte* (1828-30). Owing to the failure of the firm which commissioned him, he did not receive any payment (he had been promised £500) for this laborious and able piece of work. He died in 1830 crushed down by pecuniary anxieties, bad health, and troubles of many kinds; but with his old friend Charles Lamb beside him, stormy and difficult as his existence had been, the last words he uttered were, “Well, I have had a happy life.”

Hazlitt was a great journalist, essayist, and a sound critic of literature; he understood art, and wrote clearly and sensibly about it. To a keen perception of every kind of beauty he united a critical

judgment almost unerring (except when disturbed by violent temper or acrimonious prejudice), and a wealth of language, well maintained by the constant reading of the best and most vigorous literature. Epigram, and even paradox, is frequent in his pages. But what marks him out from the army of good writers is the immense joy and delight he put in his work. "Here," says Louis Stevenson, "is Hazlitt's own confession, from his essay *On Going a Journey*, which is so good that there should be a tax levied on all who have not read it: 'Give me the clear blue sky over my head and the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before me, and a three hours' march to dinner—and then to thinking! It is hard if I cannot start some game on these lone hills. I laugh, I run, I leap, I sing for joy.'" Many of his best essays are pieces of autobiography; and in these he pours out his enthusiasms, his passionate hopes, his likings and dislikings, with the freest power. His own criticism on himself is eminently just:—

To a want of general reading I plead guilty, and am sorry for it; but perhaps if I had read more, I might have thought less. As to my barrenness of invention, I have at least glanced over a number of subjects—painting, poetry, prose, plays, politics, Parliamentary speeches, metaphysical lore, books, men, and things. There is some point, some fancy, some feeling, some taste, shown in treating of these. . . . I have given proof of some talent, and of more honesty; if there is haste or want of method, there is no commonplace, nor a line that licks the dust.

12. **James Henry Leigh Hunt** (1784—1859) was the son of an Anglo-West-Indian, who was first a lawyer, and then a clergyman. His mother was a native of Philadelphia, and Hunt was born at Southgate, in Middlesex. He entered Christ's Hospital in 1792, three years after the departure of Charles Lamb, and, like him, he left it at the age of fifteen. A year after leaving school Leigh Hunt published a volume of poems, and in 1808 he and his brother founded a paper called *The Examiner*, in an article in which the former attacked the Prince Regent (afterwards George IV.) and had the misfortune to call him "an Adonis of fifty." For this article he suffered two years' imprisonment. He made himself very much at home in his prison, for he writes: "I papered the walls with a trellis of roses; I had the ceiling coloured with clouds and sky; the barred windows I screened

with venetian blinds ; and, when my bookcases were set up with their busts, and flowers and a pianoforte made their appearance, perhaps there was not a handsomer room on that side the water."<sup>1</sup> In this idyllic retreat, he wrote his *Story of Rimini*—an Italian tale in the ordinary heroic couplets. After his release from prison, he started a weekly journal called *The Indicator*, most of which he wrote with his own hand. In 1821-2 he lived with his family in Italy, where he edited *The Liberal*, a quarterly review which was subsidised by Lord Byron. After his return from Italy, he lived for more than thirty years in different suburbs of London, and wrote charming essays upon them. These and others he collected and published under such titles as *The Town*, *The Old Court Suburb* (Kensington), *A Jar of Honey from Mount Hybla* ; but there is little or no real unity in the books ; they are only miscellaneous collections. In 1847 he received from the Government of the day a pension of £200 a year—a much-needed assistance, as he lived in a condition of chronic impecuniosity, and is said—not without some grain of truth—to be the original of Harold Skimpole in Dickens's *Bleak House* ; but the representation is both exaggerated and unjust, and is indeed no more true to life than the delineation of Walter Savage Landor in the same work under the name of Boythorn. Leigh Hunt's style is easy, graceful, vivid, and gay. Occasionally it is loose and slipshod, and not without phrases that are commonplace if not vulgar. Probably his best book is *The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt*, in which the charm of his writing, as well as that of his personality, is best seen.

13. **Thomas De Quincey** (1785—1859).—Thomas De Quincey, as he spelt the name, was the second son of a wealthy Manchester merchant, who contented himself with the less ambitious patronymic of Thomas Quincey. The father died when his son Thomas was yet in his seventh year, but the family were amply provided for. Thomas was already a strange, wilful, little creature, puny in stature, dreamy in mind, feeding his imagination in quiet corners with tales from *The Arabian Nights* and shocking his stately, evangelical mother by

<sup>1</sup> He was imprisoned in Surrey Gaol, on the south side of the Thames.

his philosophic musings and his precocious views of the universal interdependence of Nature's workings, and of the mysterious relation between God and death. On the family removing to Bath, Thomas was sent, in his twelfth year, to the grammar school in that city. An accidental blow on the head from one of the assistant masters caused his removal from the school; and he was next sent to Manchester Grammar School, but finding life there monotonous and uncongenial, he decided in 1802 to run away, with a ten-pound note procured from a lady friend and a volume of Euripides in his pocket. By the kindly offices of an uncle he succeeded in obtaining from his mother an allowance of a guinea a week, with liberty to shape his course as he might think fit. For some time he wandered about Wales, but his innate restlessness and impatience of supervision led him to relinquish his allowance, and, borrowing twelve guineas from a friend, he started by coach for London, there to live he knew not how.

14. **His Literary Career.**—We have in his autobiographical *Sketches* a minute account of the wretched time he spent in the metropolis; although it is difficult to say how far the incidents recorded are strictly genuine. He thus speaks of his miserable experiences, when barely saved from dying of cold and hunger:—

Too generally the very attainment of any deep repose seemed as if mechanically linked to some fatal necessity of self-interruption. It was as though a cup were gradually filled by the sleepy overflow of some natural fountain, the fulness of the cup expressing symbolically the completeness of the rest: but then, in the next stage of the process, it seemed as though the rush and torrent-like babbling of the redundant waters, when running over from every part of the cup, interrupted the slumber which in their earlier stage of silent gathering they had so naturally produced. Such and so regular in its swell and its collapse—in its tardy growth and its violent dispersion—did this endless alternation of stealthy sleep and stormy awaking travel through stages as natural as the increments of twilight, or the kindlings of the dawn: no rest that was not a prologue to terror; no sweet tremulous pulses of restoration that did not suddenly explode through rolling clamours of fiery disruption.

In the autumn of 1803 De Quincey entered Worcester College, Oxford, with the insufficient allowance of £100 per annum. Here, though he neglected the prescribed subjects of study, he paid considerable attention to German and English literature, and from



a study of the Elizabethan and Jacobean writers probably acquired that mastery of magnificent prose-harmonies which enabled him to enrich our language with a style hitherto unequalled. At the university De Quincey also unfortunately acquired the habit of opium-taking, first indulged in as a remedy for neuralgia, but afterwards as a confirmed habit, the best apology for which is to be found in his bodily condition, permanently injured, as it was, by long deprivation of natural, wholesome food. He left Oxford in 1808 without taking a degree. In 1807 he had made the acquaintance of Coleridge, and soon after De Quincey realised one of his wishes in meeting Wordsworth, of whose works he had long been an ardent admirer. He now began to reside more or less constantly in London, and grew intimate with Hazlitt, Lamb, and Godwin. He continued to cultivate the friendship of Wordsworth, and in November, 1809, became the tenant of the poet's former residence at Grasmere about the same time as John Wilson (Christopher North) came to reside in the same neighbourhood. Here he passed some quiet years, adding to his literary knowledge and perfecting his matchless style in prose. Yet more and more he became the slave of opium, and though for a short time after his marriage in 1816 he shook off to some extent his dependence on the drug, he soon again succumbed to its influence; and it was not till the commencement of his literary activity in 1821 that he braced himself for a genuine struggle for freedom. It was in the pages of *The London Magazine* that the *Confessions of an Opium Eater* first saw the light, and their appearance at once assured De Quincey's position in the world of letters. The *naïveté* of the admissions, the "impassioned prose" in which they were clothed, above all the soaring sweep of imaginative metaphor, caught the attention of the reader, and chained it to these marvellous confessions. Such a burst as the following must arrest the thoughts of the most careless:—

Oh, spirit of merciful interpretation, angel of forgiveness to youth and its aberrations, that hearkenest for ever as if to some sweet choir of far-off female intercessions! will ye, choir that intercede—wilt thou, angel that forgivest—join together, and charm away that dark mighty phantom, born amidst the gathering mists of remorse, which strides after me in pursuit from forgotten days—towering for ever into proportions more

and more colossal, overhanging and overshadowing my head as if close behind, yet dating its nativity from hours that are fled by more than half a century?

From the date of the appearance of the *Confessions* De Quincey continued the occupation of a writer for the magazines, first from his home in Westmoreland or London, after 1830 from Edinburgh or Lasswade, where he resided till his death in 1859 at the age of seventy-four, having survived his wife by twenty-two years.

**15. His Work.**—De Quincey wrote no great work; as his biographer, Professor Masson, says, he “may be said to have taken his place in our literature as the author of about 150 magazine articles.” But these are unsurpassed in our language for their peculiar qualities, and perhaps only equalled in other literature by the works of Jean Paul Richter.<sup>1</sup> De Quincey’s education, for the most part solitary, pursued through a wide range among the Greek and Latin classics, through the works of the mediæval schoolmen, in the books of the earlier and less known English authors, and in the most abstruse treatises of the great masters of German philosophy, was the fitting preparation for the kind of literature he was afterwards to produce. Nor was his education confined to that of books; he learned from experience—sometimes from the direst experience—in the hard school of life, as we have already indicated. Even when he entered Oxford, he passed his residence there in almost complete solitude, reading on his own lines, and avoiding every kind of society. In Edinburgh, too, where he resided from 1830 to 1840, although he might have had good society and bright company to any extent he chose, he preferred to lead a secluded existence.

Probably his noblest writing is to be found in the *Confessions*, and in the sequel to them, the *Suspiria de Profundis*.<sup>2</sup> His *Recollections of the Lakes*, too, are full of interesting details and appreciations of the Wordsworthian school, and are written in a singularly bright, though discursive, style. De Quincey’s prose (he never attempted verse) is qualified by him as “a mode of

<sup>1</sup> Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, a celebrated German novelist and essayist, was born at Wunsiedel, Bavaria, 1763, and died at Bayreuth 1825.

<sup>2</sup> “Sighs from the Depths.”

impassioned prose." It is almost always rich, powerful, and melodious. He possessed vivid imaginative faculties, and an extraordinary power of visualising his sensations which he gave to the world in word-harmonies whose sonorous periods have the true roll of stately Elizabethan prose. His sentences, often of an elaborate structure, contain long swells of music, noble and magnificent cadences; whilst thought and expression—intimately one—move with an easy grace, or rise into passages of lofty and sustained eloquence. For this kind of eloquence De Quincey might, not unjustly, be bracketed with Milton and Ruskin. Professor Masson speaks of it as "a style of sustained splendour, of prolonged wheeling and soaring." De Quincey takes infinite pains to find the right word, and he takes as great pains to make his periods musical and rhythmical. Vivacity, brilliance, immense compass and sweep, precision in the use of words, a copious and powerful vocabulary—these are the chief features and elements of his style. The following extract from the *Suspiria* is taken from the fragment entitled *Our Ladies of Sorrow* :—

The eldest of the three is named *Mater Lachrymarum*, Our Lady of Tears. She it is that night and day raves and moans, calling for vanished faces. She stood in Rama, where a voice was heard in lamentation,— Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted. She it was that stood in Bethlehem on the night when Herod's sword swept its nurseries of Innocents, and the little feet were stiffened for ever, which, heard at times as they tottered along floors overhead, woke pulses of love in household hearts that were not unmarked in heaven. Her eyes are sweet and subtle, wild and sleepy, by turns; oftentimes rising to the clouds, oftentimes challenging the heavens. She wears a diadem round her head. And I knew by childish memories that she could go abroad upon the winds, when she heard the sobbing of litanies or the thundering of organs, and when she beheld the mustering of summer clouds. . . . And her, because she is the first-born of her house, and has the widest empire, let us honour with the title of "Madonna."

16. **Walter Savage Landor** (1775—1864) was born in Warwick in January, 1775, the son of a physician of a good Staffordshire family. The boy early manifested that love of trees, places, and books which continued to be one of his distinguishing characteristics. This truly remarkable man of letters spent his long life in one series of contests, first with the headmaster of Rugby School, from which he was practically expelled for insubordination; then

with the authorities of Oxford, whence he was rusticated ; and finally with his family, relatives, tenants, acquaintances, and every neighbour on whom he could fasten a challenge or a lawsuit. Fond of manly outdoor sports, and even in his school-days no despicable writer of verse alike in Latin and English, he pursued his impatient and defiant way, trampling on the conventions of society, equipping and leading a thousand Spanish volunteers against the French in Galicia, purchasing an estate in the mountains of Monmouthshire, stocking its vales with sheep from Segovia and planting its hills with cedars of Lebanon ; and all the time producing literary work of high quality, though lacking in all the elements of popularity. He is indeed the most remarkable example in the history of English literature of long-continued productiveness at a high level, both in prose and poetry, in Latin as well as in English. He wrote prose and verse for the unprecedented period of sixty-eight years, his earliest volume appearing in 1795, in his twenty-first year, his latest in 1863, a year before his death.

Landor thus forms a wonderful connecting link, we might almost say, between Goldsmith, who died one year before his birth, and Swinburne, who visited him in Florence a few weeks before his death. He was twenty-five when Cowper died, he was thirteen when Byron was born, and forty-nine when he died ; he saw the rise and downfall of Napoleon, the revolt of the American Colonies, and the marriage of King Edward VII. ; and he was a literary contemporary alike of Scott and Coleridge, and of Thackeray and Browning.

**17. His Literary Career.**—In 1798, the year of the appearance of the *Lyrical Ballads*, Landor published his magnificent but puzzling poem *Gebir*, founded on a shadowy Arabian legend which he has embroidered with political allusions to the France of the Revolution. It has been described by one of his biographers as exhibiting "Landor's peculiar qualities of haughty splendour and massive concentration." The poem contains the oft-quoted lines, admired and imitated alike by Wordsworth and Byron :—

But I have sinuous shells of pearly hue  
Within ; and they that lustre have imbibed  
In the Sun's palace-porch, where, when unyoked,  
His chariot-wheel stands midway in the wave.



Shake one, and it awakens; then apply  
 Its polish'd lips to your attentive ear,  
 And it remembers its august abodes,  
 And murmurs as the ocean murmurs there.

Many fugitive poems in Latin and English were published during the following ten years, but his next sustained effort was the tragedy of *Count Julian*, published in 1812. Financial troubles with respect to his Monmouthshire property had now reached so acute a stage that he found it necessary to leave England and reside on the Continent; and he flitted, like an uneasy spirit, from place to place until he reached Pisa, his residence for three years. A volume of Latin hexameters, with a critical essay also in Latin, is the fruit of his stay at Pisa, followed by two poems, inspired by the revolutionary spirit then awake alike in the Old World and in the New, entitled *Corinth* and *Regeneration*.

18. **The Imaginary Conversations.** — Landor now migrated to Florence, with which city he is henceforth intimately connected; and here he commenced the work by which he will always be remembered, the *Imaginary Conversations*. For this his enormous reading, commenced in his solitary life in South Wales and continued on the Continent, peculiarly fitted him. He nourished his mind on the noblest mental food; he read and made his own all that was best in ancient as well as in modern literature, in Greek and Latin as well as in English, French, and Italian. This work accordingly contains some of the noblest thoughts and most majestic writing of which our literature can boast. The conversations take place between persons of all ages and countries, and the subjects are as varied as the speakers.

His friend Southey recites to Porson<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth's *Laodamia* (a poem written six years after Porson's death); the Emperor Tiberius<sup>2</sup> meets and converses with his first wife, Vipsania, divorced for political reasons. In another dialogue Roger Ascham (see p. 67) warns his pupil, Lady Jane Grey, of the dangers to which political events may expose her after her

<sup>1</sup> Richard Porson, one of the greatest of English classical scholars, was born at East Ruston, Norfolk, 1759, and died in London 1808.

<sup>2</sup> Tiberius Claudius Nero succeeded Augustus as the second Roman Emperor, reigning from 14 to 37 A.D.

marriage; and in one of the latest the Russian Czar Nicholas, after his assassination, meets Diogenes<sup>1</sup> in Hades and is reproached by him for his crimes. All of these are written in a style which combines dignity and purity with strength and harmony, and in these qualities Landor easily surpassed all his contemporaries.

Of these *Conversations*, continued, altered, divided, and amplified during the remainder of his life, he completed nearly one hundred and fifty. Of a similar design were the longer works, *The Citation of William Shakespeare*, probably his least successful effort in prose; *Pericles and Aspasia*,<sup>2</sup> a series of imaginary letters; and the *Pentameron*,<sup>3</sup> supposed conversations between Petrarch and Boccaccio. The last contains some of his most beautiful and characteristic writing.

Frequent social and domestic quarrels came to a climax in 1837, when Landor left Italy and his family, and settled at Bath. Here he made the acquaintance of Dickens and Carlyle, and of Alfred Tennyson, then beginning to be known as a rising poet. In 1853 Landor published *The Last Fruit off an Old Tree*, containing a new set of conversations, and prefaced by the following startling self-characterisation, written on his seventy-fifth birthday:—

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife,  
Nature I loved, and, next to Nature, Art;  
I warmed both hands before the fire of life,  
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

For a man in whose character pugnacity was the predominant and the permanent quality, these lines sound singularly inappropriate, but in the sense of striving with others for fame or profit by his writings they contain a truth.

The last years of Landor form an exceedingly sad picture. In 1857 he engaged in an undignified squabble with a lady; he apologised, but in the following year he published a volume,

<sup>1</sup> Diogenes (412—323 B.C.) was an eccentric Greek philosopher. Alexander the Great, it is said, once asked him if he could oblige him in any way. "Yes," replied Diogenes, "stand from between me and the sun."

<sup>2</sup> Aspasia, a celebrated Greek woman of great talents and beauty, the friend of Pericles.

<sup>3</sup> *Pentameron*—literally, stories told in five days (Greek *pente*, five, and *hēmera*, a day).

entitled *Dry Sticks, fagoted by W. S. Landor*, which contained a libellous attack on the offending lady. Though suffering from a paralytic stroke, he went abroad, so as not to appear in the legal proceedings which were instituted against him. After an absence of twenty years, he rejoined his wife and family at his beautiful villa at Fiesole; but the old differences were revived, and he spent the remaining five years of his life at Florence, alienated from his family, and suffering under real and fancied wrongs.

19. **His Work.**—It is at first sight surprising that a remarkable personality like Landor's, with so long a period of literary productiveness, should, whilst favourably impressing many competent critics, have attracted so small an audience. Landor seems himself to have had an early prescience of this. "I shall dine late," he writes, "but the dining-room will be well lighted, the guests few and select." In poetry and in prose alike he produced work of the highest quality, yet the public have, as a whole, persistently refused to read it. This is partly to be accounted for by his style, but more largely by his choice of subjects and their treatment. Landor may be said to have thought in Latin, and has thus proved obscure to English readers. This led him habitually to express himself in polysyllabic words of Latin derivation, rather than in the stronger monosyllables of Anglo-Saxon origin. His constructions also are often involved, especially in his verse, which thus suffers at times from obscurity. Nevertheless in *Gebir* and, more especially, in *Count Julian*, occur passages of singular power and beauty, such as the following from the latter:—

Guilt hath pavilions, but no privacy.  
The very engine of his hatred checks  
The torturer in his transport of revenge,  
Which, while it swells his bosom, shakes his power,  
And raises friends to his worst enemy:

Yet we, alive or dead, have fellow-men  
If ever we have served them, who collect  
From prisons and from dungeons our remains,  
And bear them in their bosoms to their sons.  
Man's only relics are his benefits;  
These, be there ages, be there worlds, between,  
Retain him in communion with his kind:  
Hence is our solace, our security,

Our sustenance, till heavenly truth descends,  
Covering with brightness and beatitude  
The frail foundations of these humbler hopes,  
And like an angel guiding us, at once  
Leaves the loose chain and iron gate behind.<sup>1</sup>

His later dramas, too, contain much lofty and dignified verse. But it is in his subjects rather than in the vehicle of his literary expression that the source of his lack of popularity may be looked for. His *Gebir* deals with a misty tale of an undefined period of the world's history, Gebir being the mythical founder of Gibraltar. The romantic legend of the fall of Roderick, King of the Goths, which forms the subject of *Count Julian*, never seems to have caught the public ear, though versified by Scott and Southey as well as by Landor. On the other hand, the *Imaginary Conversations* presuppose for their enjoyment more minute knowledge of incidents of history—Roman, French, Italian, and English—than is brought to their perusal by the average reader. Thus Landor will probably remain an imposing figure in our literature, a great artist in words, a powerful delineator of human passions and frailties, but one who as a writer was content to dwell apart from his fellow men, scorning the voice of popular acclaim, and seeking an audience fit but few. But he held no uncertain views as to the value of his work. His lines to Madame de Molandé, the heroine of one of his boyish romances, conclusively prove that a certainty of enduring fame was perpetually present to his mind :

Well I remember how you smiled  
To see me write your name upon  
The soft sea-sand—'O ! what a child !  
You think you're writing upon stone !'

I have since written what no tide  
Shall ever wash away, what men  
Unborn shall read o'er ocean wide,  
And find Ianthe's name again.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Acts xii. 10.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

---

### WOMEN NOVELISTS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

1. **Introductory.**—The closing years of the eighteenth century witnessed the appearance of what was practically a new force in English literature—namely, the Woman Novelist. From the days of Aphra Behn (see p. 263), indeed, to those of Anne Radcliffe (see p. 407), isolated instances were not wanting of women who adopted the profession of letters; but no school of literary women had arisen amongst us such as the brilliant group of letter-writers and composers of “*Mémoires*” who in France shed a lustre on the later years of the fifteenth Louis. In England, fiction was languishing (for the star of Scott had not yet arisen), when from an unlikely quarter a fresh impulse was received, destined to prove a potent factor in the development of the English novel.

2. **Frances Burney** (1752—1840) was born on June 13th, 1752, at King's Lynn, where her father, an accomplished and talented musician, was then church organist. When Fanny Burney (as she was generally called) was eight years of age, her father removed to London. Her education was of a desultory and haphazard kind, but she enjoyed the freedom of her father's extensive library, listened in silence to the conversation of his distinguished guests, and profited by the hints and counsels of a strange literary recluse named Samuel Crisp. She tells us that from the age of eleven she was constantly scribbling; but her first novel, *Evelina; or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, was not produced until 1778. It was published anonymously, and took the town by storm. The reviews were favourable; Dr. Johnson got it by heart, and declared that there were passages in it which might do

honour to Richardson ; Sir Joshua Reynolds and Edmund Burke alike sat up all night to finish it. Her father disclosed the authorship, and thus, in her twenty-seventh year, the young lady found herself suddenly famous. At the invitation of Sheridan she wrote a comedy, *The Wivings*, which was unsuccessful. Not so her second novel, *Cecilia*, published in five volumes in 1782. This obtained the enthusiastic approbation of Edmund Burke, and two thousand copies were sold in three months.

In 1786, having attracted the notice of Queen Charlotte, wife of George III., Miss Burney was appointed one of the Keepers of the Robes to Her Majesty with an annual salary of £200, a post which she unwillingly held till 1791, when she resigned owing to failing health, and was granted a pension of £100 a year. The position was indeed one of gilded slavery. She had to attend the Queen's toilette three times a day, was practically in attendance from six in the morning till twelve at night, and was often obliged to remain standing for five hours together till her knees gave way with fatigue. In 1793 she married General D'Arblay, a French Royalist refugee, and as their whole permanent income consisted of her pension, she naturally endeavoured to supplement it by her writings. After the production of an unsuccessful tragedy, she published by subscription, in 1796, her third novel, *Camilla*, which is said to have cleared three thousand guineas, but was by no means a literary triumph for its author. In 1801 her husband returned to France, where Madame D'Arblay joined him the following year, and where, save for one brief interval, she remained till the return of Napoleon from Elba. Her last novel, *The Wanderer*, had appeared three years previously, and, in the words of Sir Leslie Stephen, "was apparently never read by anybody." She edited her father's *Memoirs* in 1832, and died in 1840 at the age of eighty-seven. Two years after her death appeared her *Letters and Diaries* in five volumes, two more being added in 1846. These are full of intensely interesting and amusing details of life at the court of George III., and of reminiscences of Dr. Johnson, Burke, Reynolds, and her other friends.

3. **Her Work.**—It is somewhat puzzling to account for the wonderful success of *Evelina* and *Cecilia*. To readers of our day

the characters are sometimes tedious, and always unconvincing. They strike us rather as personified qualities, foibles, or eccentricities, than as breathing human beings. But the time was, as we have seen, barren of readable fiction. The novel of romance had made its appearance in Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (see p. 406), but had hitherto had but one notable successor in *The Old English Baron* of Clara Reeve (p. 407); and the novel of manners had just emerged from the coarseness of *Tristram Shandy* in Goldsmith's idyllic *Vicar of Wakefield*. But a public which had voted the comedies of the latter author vulgar would require more fashionable company than that of the Vicar, and Miss Burney's novels supplied the want. And the author had greater gifts than were perhaps perceived by her contemporaries. Genuine pathos is not wanting in some scenes, and the humour so evident in her diaries is not altogether absent from her novels. Her style, at first easy and perspicuous, became, in an effort to imitate that of Dr. Johnson, more laboured and antithetical than even his heaviest passages, and degenerates in the *Memoirs* of her father into a "barbarous patois," to use Macaulay's exaggerated phrase. The great claim of Miss Burney to a permanent place in literature must rest mainly on her position as the pioneer of the women novelists of the nineteenth century.

"Miss Burney did for the English novel what Jeremy Collier did for the English drama; and she did it in a better way. . . . She took away the reproach which lay on a most useful and delightful species of composition. She vindicated the right of her sex to an equal share in a fair and noble province of letters."—MACAULAY.

4. A writer of more varied accomplishments is **Maria Edgeworth** (1767—1849), daughter of a wealthy Irish landowner. Her ancestors had given their name to the village of Edgeworthstown where Goldsmith was educated—the hamlet of Pallas, his birthplace, being also the property of the family. Her father, a man of considerable but eccentric ability, was four times married, his last wife being but two years older than her step-daughter Maria. Amongst his many hobbies, Mr. Edgeworth had strong opinions on education, and in 1795 his daughter published *The Parent's Assistant*, which embodies her father's views on the subject. In 1801 appeared

*Early Lessons*, a series of very delightful children's stories, which must have proved a boon to the young people of the early nineteenth century, though more stimulating mental food has made them taste dull to the palates of a later generation. The stories of *Rosamond*; or, *The Purple Jar*, and *Frank*, and his experiences with humble peasant folk, succeeded in skilfully disguising in a dress of fiction the teaching which, in Miss Edgeworth's writings, always lurks under the most innocent-seeming narrative; and in the *Moral Tales* themselves, the fact that they are books with a purpose is only slightly more evident. In 1800 Miss Edgeworth produced her most remarkable book in *Castle Rackrent*, the first and perhaps the most truthful description of Irish country life ever written. The style of this novel is simple, singularly lucid, fluent, and easy, and the writer's power of keen observation enabled her to impart a vivid reality to her narrative, which renders it as readable now as when it was first written. The book was published anonymously, and met with a most favourable reception. Yet Miss Edgeworth did not continue to work this new and successful vein. In 1801 appeared *Belinda*, one of the longest of her works, and *Popular Tales* (1804) was followed by *Tales of Fashionable Life*, of which a first series appeared in 1809 and a second in 1812. In one of the latter Miss Edgeworth for the first time returned to the subject of her early triumph in *The Absentee*, which deals with Irish landlords living in England who regarded their Irish estates merely as sources of income, and not as places of even occasional residence. The third novel of the group is *Ormond*, written in 1817. In 1823 Miss Edgeworth visited Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford, and the visit was duly returned by Sir Walter, who found in Edgeworthstown "neither mud hovels nor naked peasantry, but snug cottages and smiling faces all about." Miss Edgeworth died in 1849, "busy," says Mrs. Ritchie, "beneficent, modest, and intelligent to the last . . . mourned as unmarried women of eighty are not often mourned."

5. **An Estimate.**—The importance of her place in fiction is largely due to the statement of Sir Walter Scott in the preface to the collected edition of his own novels:—

Without being so presumptuous as to hope to emulate the rich humour, the pathetic tenderness, and admirable truth which pervade the work of



my accomplished friend, I felt that something might be attempted for my own country of the same kind as that which Miss Edgeworth so fortunately achieved for Ireland.

Outside her Irish novels, however, her tone is too consistently didactic: she never succeeded in shaking off the influence of her father's collaboration. This tone it is which leads Byron to speak of the mother of Don Juan as—

Miss Edgeworth's novels stepping from their covers.

The desire to inculcate moral truths, to describe the dangers incidental to youth, and to warn her readers against them—this was her patent and indeed avowed object. The changed conditions of modern life have dulled the point of these lessons; and it is only the quaint prettiness of her early children's tales which redeems them from oblivion. When, however, we turn to her Irish novels, the case is altered. Here her keen observation, strong common-sense, and absolute truthfulness have furnished us with pictures of Irish life scarcely equalled since her time, and never surpassed. While wanting in the fineness of touch of Jane Austen, and in the creative faculty of Scott, she has, as a delineator of character, seldom been excelled. Her plots are forced and improbable, but her style is always eminently bright and lively, and has the great merit of holding the reader's attention.

6. **Jane Austen** (1775—1817), one of the greatest woman novelists that England has produced, was born in the little country parsonage of Steventon, in Hampshire—a parish of which her father was rector, and where she passed the first twenty-six years of her life. On the death of Mr. Austen, the family removed to Southampton, and then to Chawton, near Winchester. Jane also visited Bath frequently and knew its patrons, their habits and manners, very well. She and her elder sister Cassandra had received a "plain" education at "a real, honest, old-fashioned boarding-school." The Austen girls were not taught to "repeat the chronological order of the Kings of England, and of the Roman Emperors as low as Severus; besides a great deal of the heathen mythology, and all the metals, semi-metals, plants, and distinguished philosophers." The facts of the rest of Miss Austen's life, apart from her

literary activity, are few and meagre, and her career ended all too soon. In 1816 she was attacked by consumption; and in 1817 she died at Winchester at the early age of forty-two, and was buried in the Cathedral of that city.

7. **Her Work.**—The first group of her novels was written at Steventon between 1796 and 1798, though none of them were published before 1811. These were *Northanger Abbey*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Pride and Prejudice*; and the second group, written at Chawton between 1811 and 1816, comprised *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*. Her two best novels are *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice*. The latter was written when she was barely twenty-one, though it was doubtless subjected to much revision previous to its publication in 1813. She had little or no intellectual companionship, nor did she mix with literary people. She wrote on little slips of paper in the family sitting-room, people coming and going, servants asking for instructions; and even her friends were quite unaware of the occupation she was engaged in. Where novelists like Fielding or Richardson or Walter Scott used large canvases and covered them with life-size figures, Jane Austen worked, as she said herself, on "a little bit of ivory two inches wide, on which she worked with a brush so fine as to produce little effect after much labour." The subject of her novels is simply the country life of the upper middle class at the beginning of the nineteenth century; and to this field, which she knew through and through, she confined her labours all her life. Many of her characters are very much alike to the outward eye; but a closer inspection and a more intimate acquaintanceship with them show how carefully and accurately they are discriminated. "Each is endowed with marvellously vivid individuality." Genius works by simple methods; and Jane Austen was a genius. Her method was to build up a character by an infinite succession of delicate touches, every line true and delicately etched. She spared no pains; she polished and re-polished; she elaborated all the qualities of her characters; and yet she is never tiresome or prosaic. There is little or no plot in any of her novels. Her words are always the right words, and they were chosen for their sound as well as for their sense. Subtle and delicate as is her style, her

meaning is always perfectly clear. Humour, irony, even sarcasm interpenetrate all her writings ; but the sarcasm is always under the restraint of a noble nature and genuine artistic feeling.

8. **Her Style.**—In reading her novels one feels that no telling incident, no ludicrous character, no inept expression ever escaped the notice of this keen-eyed observer. We know that as a child she took part in private theatricals, and in the similar entertainment in *Mansfield Park* we see the finished picture, then doubtless hastily sketched, in the jealousies, heart-burnings, and vacillations of all those concerned. And doubtless much of that which we attribute to creativeness is rather due to the supreme capacity for seizing the exact characteristic of an acquaintance and embodying it for her readers in phrase of faultless felicity. The limpid prose of Addison is reproduced in even higher perfection in the writings of Miss Austen, and if it seems cold beside the more florid utterances of present-day fiction, it yet possesses a charm and grace which captivate the ear and grow on the imagination. Her male characters are much less successful than her women. Her young men are for the most part rather priggish "walking gentlemen," though the elder are much more real and convincing. Probably the attitude and relation of the sexes to each other precluded in her day and generation that careful study of her masculine coevals which she could bestow upon their fathers. On the other hand, such character-sketches as Miss Bates in *Emma*, and Mrs. Palmer in *Sense and Sensibility*, may rank with the Mrs. Nickleby of Dickens or the Mrs. Poyser of George Eliot.

"Mr. Palmer does not hear me . . . he never does sometimes. It is so ridiculous" ; or :—

"He is so droll ! He never tells me anything" :—

are perfect specimens of the conversation of a type not confined to the early nineteenth century.

(i) "Read again, and for the third time at least, Miss Austen's very finely written novel, *Pride and Prejudice*. That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life, which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The big Bow-wow strain I can do myself like any now going ; but the exquisite touch, which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment, is denied to me."—SIR WALTER SCOTT (Journal, March 14th, 1826).

(ii) "Highest of those who have exhibited human nature by means of dialogue stands Shakespeare. His variety is like the variety of nature, endless diversity, scarcely any monstrosity. Shakespeare has neither equal nor second. But among the writers who have approached nearest to the manner of the great master, we have no hesitation in placing Jane Austen, a woman of whom England is justly proud. She has given us a multitude of characters, all, in a certain sense, commonplace, all such as we meet every day. Yet they are all as perfectly discriminated from each other as if they were the most eccentric of human beings."—MACAULAY.

9. Scotland was, as might be expected, not without its representatives in the new school of women novelists, of whom the most notable were **Mary Brunton** (1778—1818) and Susan Ferrier. The former, daughter of Colonel Thomas Balfour, was born in the island of Barra, in the Orkneys, and in her twenty-first year married the Rev. Alexander Brunton, of Bolton, near Haddington. She was the author of two novels—*Self-Control* (1810) and *Discipline* (1814)—both marked by a strong moral and religious tone. They achieved considerable success, and have been often reprinted. A French translation of the first was published in Paris in 1829. A more powerful writer is found in **Susan Ferrier** (1782—1854), daughter of an Edinburgh Writer to the Signet. Miss Ferrier moved in the best literary circles in Edinburgh, and her visits with her father to Inverary Castle, the seat of the Duke of Argyll, accustomed her to fashionable society. Her three novels, *Marriage* (1818), *The Inheritance* (1824), and *Destiny* (1831), have often been compared with the work of Miss Austen. The two writers have, nevertheless, little in common save the general feminine characteristic of keen and intelligent observation. Miss Ferrier constructs her tales on a much more sentimental basis than her English precursor, and is much less delicate in her literary workmanship. She possesses considerable powers of satire, and her work is not free from the didactic tone of Miss Edgeworth's novels.

10. **Frances Trollope** (1780—1863), best known as the mother of Anthony and of Thomas Adolphus Trollope, was herself a prolific writer of novels. On her husband's death in 1835, she gave up the house at Harrow where she had resided (the "Orley Farm" of her son Anthony's well-known novel), and went abroad in



order to produce books of travel, interspersing them with works of fiction, which had a considerable success at the time. The best known of these are *The Widow Barnaby* and *The Vicar of Wrexhill*, which are mainly occupied by portraiture of vulgar persons, whose coarseness is, however, sometimes redeemed by their drollery.

11. **Mary Russell Mitford** (1787—1855).—In the recent revival of interest in the women writers of the early nineteenth century considerable attention has been paid to Miss Mitford, the daughter of a doctor at Alresford, described as “clever, selfish, unprincipled, and extravagant.” His daughter was educated at a French school in London, and in 1810 she published a volume of poems of little merit. Further volumes of poetry earned the severe criticism of *The Quarterly*; and, the father’s gambling and extravagance having reduced the family to poverty, his daughter turned her attention to some more lucrative literary pursuit. The household removed to Three Mile Cross, between Reading and Basingstoke, and Miss Mitford drew on her experiences there to produce a series of sketches of rural life under the title of *Our Village*, which have gone through numerous editions to the present day, and will ever remain an English classic. These constituted a new literary departure, and earned the warm commendations of Charles Lamb, “Christopher North,” and Mrs. Browning, the latter characterising their author as “a sort of prose Crabbe in the sun.”

12. **Harriet Martineau** (1802—1876) was the third daughter of a Norwich manufacturer of Huguenot extraction. She was a delicate child, and the stern discipline of her parents and the rough boisterousness of her healthier elder brothers and sisters rendered her temper gloomy, and fostered in her a somewhat morbid tone of mind. A member of the philosophic school of Godwin, she had been brought up as a Unitarian, and was early interested in metaphysics. Few as versatile writers are to be found in the annals of our literature; her first literary efforts were some melancholy poems, but she soon found more practical scope for her undoubted ability. From the tales published as *Illustrations of Political Economy* and the breezy and wholesome *Feats on the Fiord*, alike intended for, though not alike popular with, children,

to her *Eastern Life* and her condensation of Comte's<sup>1</sup> *Positive Philosophy*, her writings cover a surprisingly wide field of thought and expression. It was not until 1839 that she published her first novel, *Deerbrook*, followed in 1840 by *The Hour and the Man*, which contains an imaginative history of the negro revolution in San Domingo, and of which the patriot Toussaint L'Ouverture<sup>2</sup> is the hero. Miss Martineau suffered all her life from wretched health, and yet she lived to the age of seventy-four. How prodigious was her literary activity may be gathered from the fact that she contributed to *The Daily News* alone no less than 1,642 articles, while writing such voluminous and remarkable works as the *History of the Thirty Years' Peace*. In fact she was an early and portentous example of the publicist and journalist; and was one of that almost forgotten group of thinkers and writers who did so much to change the whole aspect of society. She says of herself in her *Autobiography* that she had "small imaginative and suggestive powers, and therefore no approach to genius"; her surroundings, and the mental atmosphere of the period in which she wrote, had a cramping influence on whatever creative faculty she possessed; and her literary merits are mainly fearless independence of judgment and clear and distinct utterance.

13. **Charlotte Brontë** (1816—1855).—No more interesting group has appeared in the annals of English literature than that of the Brontë sisters—Charlotte, Emily, and Anne—around whose family history has gathered a network of mythical romance which bids fair to obscure the facts of their lives. Of the sisters, Charlotte, eldest of the three who survived to exert a striking literary influence on their day, was the third daughter of the Rev. Patrick Brontë, himself one of ten children of a struggling North of Ireland farmer named Hugh Prunty. Patrick, after acting as a schoolmaster at Drumgooland in County Down, was, by the kind-

<sup>1</sup> Auguste Comte (1798—1857) was a celebrated French philosopher. He was the founder of Positivism, which, on the religious side, may be defined as a worship of humanity and especially of all great men and women, whose lives have been devoted to the well-being and progress of the human race.

<sup>2</sup> Toussaint L'Ouverture (1743—1803) was an enlightened negro slave who attempted to erect Haiti into an independent republic, and to shake off the yoke of France. He was defeated and captured, after a series of bloody conflicts with the French forces, and sent to France, where he died in confinement.

ness of the vicar of that parish, enabled to graduate at Cambridge and take orders in the Church of England. On leaving Ireland he had assumed the name of Brontë, doubtless as more euphonious than the form used by his ancestors. He became curate of Hartshead, and eventually in 1820 perpetual curate of Haworth, nine miles from Bradford, in Yorkshire. In 1821 Mrs. Brontë died of cancer, and the management of the household was undertaken by her sister, who seldom left her room, and allowed the children practically to follow their own devices. In 1823 a school for the daughters of clergymen in needy circumstances was started by subscription at Cowan's Bridge, near Kirby-Lonsdale; and to this school the Rev. Patrick Brontë consigned the four elder of his motherless daughters in 1824, the youngest of them, Emily, being then but six years of age. Owing to an increase of pupils, some mismanagement occurred in the school; a low fever broke out in 1825, and, though the Brontës escaped sickness at the time, yet the two elder soon after became seriously ill and were taken home, to die the same year. The school has been pilloried by Charlotte Brontë in *Jane Eyre*, Helen Burns representing her eldest sister, but the picture is pardonably exaggerated, and a vindication of the school was published in 1859. The surviving sisters left before the following winter, and for the next six years remained at home pursuing a desultory education mainly under the care of Charlotte, who was but ten years of age at the time of leaving Cowan's Bridge. They led a strange dreamy life, their very games consisting of idealising the persons of whom they read in the newspapers; and Charlotte had already begun to cover every scrap of paper she could lay her hands on with tales and adventures, of which the Duke of Wellington was commonly the hero. In 1831 Charlotte was again sent to school at Roehead, between Leeds and Huddersfield, where she remained a year, some of her schoolfellows afterwards figuring in her novel of *Shirley*. Four years later Charlotte obtained a post as teacher in the school at Roehead, her sister Emily accompanying her as a pupil, but failing health before very long compelled Charlotte to return home. In 1841 Charlotte and Emily went to a school in Brussels in order to perfect their knowledge of French and German for scholastic

purposes. The death of their aunt recalled them the following year; but M. Héger, the principal of the Brussels *pensionnat* (the Paul Emmanuel of *Villette*, which is mainly autobiographical), offered Charlotte a post as pupil-teacher, which she accepted and held for twelve months.

14. **The Brontë Novels.**—In 1846 the three sisters put together and published a small volume of verse, to which each contributed, under the names of "Currer," "Ellis," and "Acton Bell," thus preserving their genuine initials. They next attempted fiction, again in concert, *The Professor*, by "Currer Bell," founded on her experiences in Brussels; *Wuthering Heights*, by "Ellis Bell"; and *Agnes Grey*, by "Acton Bell." Of these the two latter were accepted for publication, the first was declined; but its author did not lose heart, and at once commenced, and the same year finished, her best known and greatest work, *Jane Eyre*. This when offered to a publisher was immediately accepted, issued, and achieved a wonderful success. The book did not, indeed, attract the attention of the critics; but it at once seized on the popular taste, and reached a second edition within six months of its appearance. Up to this the incognito of the sisters had been strictly observed, but complications with publishers now decided them to visit London, and to put an end to all uncertainty on the subject.

Death was now once again busy in the Brontë household. In the year 1848 Branwell, the only son, and Emily, the second surviving sister, died within a few months of each other, and early the following year their deaths were followed by that of Anne. Thus Charlotte was left alone with her father. In 1849 she published *Shirley*, and in 1853 her last novel, *Villette*. In the following year she married her father's curate, Mr. Nicholls, and died March 31st, 1855, after less than a year of happy married life.

15. **Charlotte Brontë's Work.**—No more epoch-making book has appeared in the fiction of the nineteenth century than *Jane Eyre*. For such an analysis of the female heart we may seek in vain through the range of preceding English literature. As a late writer has pointed out,<sup>1</sup> "in previous love tales, even when

<sup>1</sup> *The Brontës in Fact and Fiction*, Angus M. MacKay.



women were the authors, it was the man who longed, who suffered, who was left in suspense, and a veil remained over the heart of the heroine until shyly half-lifted in the closing scenes. Charlotte Brontë's bolder method revealed to us a hemisphere almost unknown, or, at least, not mapped out." This it is which constitutes the great value of her novels. Almost every character, almost every incident, is drawn from real life; yet her work is removed by an unbridgeable gulf alike from the dainty etchings of Miss Austen and the convincing realism of Miss Edgeworth. It is the quality of intensity in the world of feeling, and not actual existence in the world of fact, that, in Charlotte Brontë's work, gives alike to characters and incidents their unfailing power of carrying conviction. And probably it was the novelty of such revelation which led critics first to pronounce these novels the work of a man, and then, on learning the true sex of their author, to accuse her of coarseness. To such criticism her own indignant protest to Miss Martineau, no unfriendly censor, is final: "I know what love is as I understand it; and if man or woman should be ashamed of feeling such love, then is there nothing right, noble, faithful, truthful, unselfish in this earth, as I comprehend rectitude, fidelity, truth, and disinterestedness." Of the relative position of the women novelists of the nineteenth century, there will be much diversity of opinion, but few will be found to refuse a foremost place to Charlotte Brontë.

(i) "Which of her readers has not become her friend? Who that has known her book has not admired the artist's noble English, the burning love of truth, the bravery, the simplicity, the indignation at wrong, the eager sympathy, the pious love and reverence, the passionate honour, so to speak, of the woman?"—THACKERAY.

(ii) "But it would, as I venture to think, be little or nothing more or less than accurate to recognise in George Eliot a type of intelligence vivified and coloured by a vein of genius, in Charlotte Brontë a type of genius directed and moulded by the touch of intelligence."—ALGERNON SWINBURNE.

16. The lives of **Emily Jane Brontë** (1818—1848) and of **Anne Brontë** (1820—1849) have been incidentally dealt with in that of their better known sister. The former has left us but one novel, the weird and powerful tale of *Wuthering Heights*, of which the

originality has, in spite of faults of construction, so impressed many critics as to convince them that the younger sister was in no respect the inferior of the elder in creative genius. Charlotte Brontë distinctly states of her that "she had scarcely more practical knowledge of the peasantry amongst whom she lived than a nun has of the country people who sometimes pass her convent gates." This marvellous, pessimistic story of the triumph of evil over good is therefore all the more wonderful as a creative effort. The novels of Anne Brontë—*Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*—are altogether weaker, both in conception and execution, than those of her more gifted sisters.

"This instinct for the tragic use of landscape was well-nigh even more potent and conspicuous in Emily than in Charlotte. Even in Charlotte Brontë's highest work, I find no touches of such exquisite strength and triumphant simplicity as here."—ALGERNON SWINBURNE.

17. **Mrs. Gaskell** (1810—1865), now best known as the friend and biographer of Charlotte Brontë, was herself a novelist of no mean order. She seems to have been the first to recognise in the novel a possible medium for the discussion of social problems. The growth of industrial centres had already in 1848, the date of the appearance of her first novel, *Mary Barton*, produced much of that grinding misery so often to be found in the large manufacturing towns; and Mrs. Gaskell, wife of a Unitarian minister in Manchester, had a sympathetic knowledge of the lives of the cotton operatives amongst whom she lived. Her command alike of humour and pathos, her bright and effective style, and the lifelike reality of her characters and their surroundings, should have rescued her novels from the comparative neglect which they have experienced, and ensured for them a place at least beside the writings of Miss Mitford, and a rank, though a subordinate rank, with the novels of Jane Austen; but the manifest appeal on behalf of the operative class seems to have had a deterrent effect on modern readers. Her other novels are *Ruth*, *Cranford* (which has been compared not unfavourably with Miss Mitford's *Our Village*), *Cousin Phyllis*, *North and South*, and *Wives and Daughters*, which, though left unfinished at her death, is probably the best of her works.

18. **George Eliot** (1819—1880).—Mary Ann Evans, better known under her pen-name of George Eliot, was born on November 22nd, 1819, the second daughter of the second marriage of a prosperous land-agent, who had commenced life as a carpenter and builder. Her early years were passed at Griff, near Nuneaton, in Warwickshire; and her education, commenced in a dame-school beside her home, was continued at a boarding-school at Nuneaton. She early showed a taste for reading, and at the age of thirteen was sent to a more advanced school at Coventry. In 1835 she returned home to nurse her mother in her last illness, and her elder sister's marriage, within a year of her mother's death, left the younger daughter in charge of her father's house. She became, and remained through life, an "exemplary housewife," without neglecting her mental improvement, continuing especially the study of Italian, German, and music. She was greatly influenced by the wife of one of her father's brothers, once a vehement Methodist preacher, and the original of Dinah Morris in *Adam Bede*, and for a time her deep religious sentiments took a strongly evangelical tone. In 1841 her father resigned his business to his married son, and with his daughter removed to Coventry. Here she made the acquaintance of a little group of philosophic thinkers of sceptical views, and some of their writings had a profound effect on Miss Evans's religious opinions, an effect deepened soon after by her reading, and eventually translating into English, *The Life of Jesus*, by Strauss.<sup>1</sup> In her mind, however, the "religious sentiment survived a theological shipwreck." She says: "All creatures about to moult, or to cast off an old skin, . . . have sickly feelings. It was so with me. . . . I am enjoying repose, strength, and ardour in a greater degree than I have ever known, and yet I never felt my own insignificance and imperfection so completely." In 1849 she lost her father, and soon afterwards joined some friends in a trip to the Continent, where she remained for nearly a year. On her return she became a contributor to *The Westminster Review*, and in 1851 was offered and accepted the post of assistant-editor of that periodical. Her editorial work brought her into intimate association with many of the leading

<sup>1</sup> David Friedrich Strauss, a celebrated theological and philosophical writer, and a native of Würtemberg, was born in 1808, and died in 1874.

literary men of the day, amongst whom was George Henry Lewes, an accomplished but erratic genius, then editor of *The Leader*. Between these two a warm friendship soon sprang up, and Miss Evans lived with him till his death in 1878.

19. **Her Novels.**—In 1856 George Eliot, now in her thirty-seventh year, at length found her real vocation as a writer of fiction, by producing *Amos Barton*, the first of a series of tales which originally appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*, and were afterwards collected and published as *Scenes of Clerical Life*. They came out under the pseudonym of George Eliot, a name by which the writer has ever since been recognised in English literature, and were founded, as were all her early novels, on incidents remembered from her childhood. Indeed, so easy was the identification of some of the persons and circumstances referred to that unpleasantness was caused thereby. The tales obtained a success sufficient to induce their author to continue her efforts, and they were speedily followed by her best novels, *Adam Bede* (1858) and *The Mill on the Floss* (1860). The short and sad idyllic tale of *Silas Marner* appeared in 1861, succeeded by a pause of preparation for a new departure in the historic novel of *Romola*, founded on the career of Fra Savonarola,<sup>1</sup> for which she received from *The Cornhill* a sum of £7,000, the novel appearing in that magazine in fourteen parts (1862-3). An interval of five years elapsed before the appearance of *Felix Holt*, which may be said to conclude the first series of her novels, and the copyright of which was sold to Messrs. Blackwood for £5,000. Her next literary effort was in the new, and for her unsuccessful, field of dramatic poetry: *The Spanish Gypsy* is a tedious and laboured work, in which the philosophic ideals of the Positivist school are allowed to obtrude to the complete weakening of dramatic force. That its author is not incapable of lofty poetic expression is evident from its opening lines:—

Broad-breasted Spain, leaning with equal love  
On the mid sea that moans with memories,  
And on the untravell'd ocean's restless tides.

---

<sup>1</sup> Girolamo Savonarola (1452—1498), an Italian monk of the Dominican order, was a moral, political, and religious reformer. For his outspoken denunciation of abuses he was put to death at Florence in 1498.



*The Legend of Jubal* and other poems proved no more successful than their predecessor; and George Eliot had already returned to fiction before they appeared. In 1871-2 was published, in eight parts, the lengthiest novel which had yet proceeded from her pen—*Middlemarch*—of which 25,000 copies were sold in three years; and in 1876 her last and longest novel, *Daniel Deronda*, was produced in similar form, and was financially even more successful than its predecessor. In 1878 died, as we have said, George Henry Lewes, and in April, 1880, George Eliot, then over sixty years of age, and in failing health, was married to Mr. John Walter Cross, and, after a short continental trip, she died at Chelsea on December 22nd, 1880.

20. **Her Work.**—The novels of George Eliot have been the subject of much conflicting criticism, and indeed it is difficult to pass judgment on them as a whole. They are books in which the reader finds more or less to admire in proportion to what he or she brings to their perusal. The public of her day assigned to her a high position in the literature of a great creative period. As Sir Leslie Stephen has pointed out, the best work of Dickens, Thackeray, Bulwer Lytton, and Charles Kingsley, all the work of the Brontës, and the beginnings of Anthony Trollope, lie within the brief period of 1845-55. Into the great gallery already so fully occupied stepped the work of George Eliot, and that work at once achieved a marked success. Mrs. Poyser won the suffrages of readers who had lately made the acquaintance of Mrs. Nickleby and Becky Sharp; and Maggie Tulliver was no less heartily welcomed than Little Dorrit, preceding her by one year, and Ethel Newcome, her senior by three. But there is little doubt that *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss* possess a more permanent interest and charm than their author's later productions. In the earlier novels George Eliot drew on her own recollections, and they consequently exhibit a freshness and spontaneity which are absent from the more philosophic novels which were to follow. Her aunt, the Methodist revivalist, who, when the Society decided against female preaching, joined another sect rather than be silenced, bore indeed but little likeness to Dinah Morris; but the surroundings in which she moved are reproduced with a fidelity

due to the tolerant fairness of George Eliot's nature. In *Romola* we find, on the contrary, an effort to reconstruct a society long since passed into nothingness, and to group it round a striking historical figure already an occasion of much controversy. How far George Eliot succeeded in this attempt may be a subject for difference of opinion, and, notwithstanding all the power shown in the creation of the characters of Savonarola, Tito, and Romola, it is a question whether they will find a permanent place among the unfading portraits in the treasure-house of historical romance. *Middlemarch* contains three different *motifs*, not too harmoniously woven together, but with many readers the more complex psychological interest will compensate for the uniformly gloomy tone of the book, and for the lack of that humour which in Mrs. Poyser and the aunts Mrs. Gleg and Mrs. Pullet so brightens the pages of her early work. These faults and merits are alike intensified in *Daniel Deronda*, in which the story of the Jewish hero and of Mordecai, with its consequent social and political theories, injures the powerful study of Gwendolen and Grandcourt. In these two novels at least is very apparent the truth of what Mr. Edmund Gosse says of George Eliot: "She was born to please, but was, unhappily, persuaded that her mission was to teach." Even the style of the earlier books, where the dialogue is invariably animated and perspicuous, is replaced by a depth and intensity which demand too much concentration from the average reader. But when all has been said, the place of George Eliot, if not the highest in modern fiction, must at least be a very high one. She traces with a keen analytic power the very sources of human action, and identifies herself by a rare exercise of sympathy with characters the most diverse. Herself a rationalist, with at least a leaning to Positivism, the sermons and prayers of Dinah Morris were none the less, she tells us, "written with hot tears as they surged up in her own mind"; and she can as clearly and convincingly enter into the feelings of the beautiful and treacherous "panther cub" Tito, and a cold-blooded reptile like Grandcourt, as into those of the warm-hearted Maggie Tulliver or the simple-natured Adam Bede. Perhaps we can best sum up her merits in the words of a great continental

critic<sup>1</sup> when he says: "What we see in George Eliot's maturity is a great and beautiful soul, clear and calm, which has known or guessed, felt or anticipated, the feeling of everything."

(i) "Among artists who with Shakespeare unite breadth of sympathy with power of interpreting the rarer and more intense experiences of the souls of men, George Eliot must be placed."—PROFESSOR DOWDEN.

(ii) "Complete in all its parts, and strong in all, the nature of George Eliot is yet not one of those rare natures which without effort are harmonious. There is no impression made more decisively upon the reader of her books than this. No books bear upon their faces more unmistakably the pain of moral conflict, and the pain of moral victory, only less bitter than that of defeat. Great forces warring with one another; a sorrowful, a pathetic victory—that is what we discern."—*Idem*.

(iii) "George Eliot looked on the world with a certain aloofness. She read little of the ephemeral literature of the day, and apparently thought little of what she read. She looked at political warfare from a distance, and did not go into society deeply interested in such matters. . . . She had not, therefore, the experience which could enable her to describe contemporary life, with its social and political ambitions, and the rough struggles for existence in which practical lawyers and men of business are mainly occupied. . . . The questions, however, in which she was profoundly interested were undeniably of the highest importance. The period of her writings was one in which, as we can now see more clearly than at the time, very significant changes were taking place in English thought and life. Controversies on 'Evolutionism' and Socialism and democracy were showing the set of the current. George Eliot's heroes and heroines are all more or less troubled by the results, whether they live ostensibly in England or in distant countries and centuries."—SIR LESLIE STEPHEN.

(iv) "As a writer of romances, George Eliot differs essentially from all the other writers of romance in her own or preceding generations. Most certainly she was not a born romancer; she had no spontaneous gift of telling stories, no irrepressible genius that way. . . . With George Eliot we too often are made to feel that the picture would have been at any rate more enjoyable, if the artist had taken less pains."—FREDERIC HARRISON.

(v) "With respect to *Romola*, though we must all agree with Mr. Oscar Browning that it is 'replete with learning,' 'weighted with knowledge in every page,' exquisite in art, and so forth, it is really impossible to call it with him 'the best historical novel ever written.' . . . To frame in a complex background of historical erudition an ethical problem of even greater complexity and subtlety—this was a task which might have sorely tried even greater powers than hers—a task in which Goethe and Scott might have succeeded, but which Goethe and Scott were too truly the born artists to attempt. *Romola* is certainly a wonderful monument of literary accomplishments; but it remains a *tour de force*, too elaborate, too laboured, too intricate, too erudite."—*Idem*.

<sup>1</sup> Edmond Schérer.

21. **Dinah Maria Craik** (1826—1887), best known under her maiden name of Miss Mulock, was the daughter of Thomas Mulock, a dissenting minister, and was born at Stoke-on-Trent. She married in 1864 George Lillie Craik, a partner in the firm of Macmillan & Co. In 1849 was published her first novel, *The Ogilvies*, a domestic tale written, as are all her works, with a strong moral tendency. This was favourably received, and was followed by *Olive* (1850), the most imaginative of her novels, *The Head of the Family* (1851), *Agatha's Husband* (1853), and *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1856). The last is by far her ablest and most successful work; it possesses quite sufficient merit to give to its author a high place amongst the novelists of the century. Her last novel, *A Life for a Life*, though the subject of much favourable criticism, by no means reaches the level attained by *John Halifax, Gentleman*. "The tender and philanthropic, and at the same time energetic and practical womanhood of ordinary life, has never," says Dr. Garnett, "had a more sufficient representative."



## CHAPTER XXV.

---

### PROSE WRITERS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

**Introductory.**—We have already seen, in dealing with the Romantic movement, how a new and rich field of prose fiction was opened up, while the early part of the nineteenth century also saw a new school of essayists with a critical note of interpretation, both in literature and life, which was distinctively and peculiarly their own. But the impetus which was, as already indicated, given to human thought in every department of knowledge, and every field of inquiry, brought forth still more abundant fruit, and made the nineteenth century richer in prose literature than any of the centuries that have gone before. So profuse is it, so varied in matter and in style, that only its more special features and the more important writers can be treated of here.

1. **Historians.**—In no department was greater enterprise shown than in that of history. The early part of the century saw the growth and development of the new historical spirit under German influence, which soon showed itself in a fresh interpretation of ancient history from the light thrown on it by the more modern and scientific method of treatment. This influence may be traced to Niebuhr's great work, his *Roman History*, published in 1811.

Of these writers **Connop Thirlwall** (1797—1875), a distinguished graduate and Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, afterwards Bishop of St. Davids, wrote a *History of Greece*, which all the qualities of a sound scholar did not prevent from being dull. The work was soon eclipsed by the *History of Greece*, a more popular work from the pen of **George Grote** (1794—1871), the son of a London banker. Commencing with the mythological period he traces the history

of Greece' down to the time of Alexander the Great. The style is good, and the book contains many fine descriptive passages; it gives a more just and candid estimate of the institutions of ancient Greece than another *History of Greece* by **William Mitford** (1744—1827), as Grote's radical views caused him to sympathise with the democratic form of Government, a form which Mitford termed one of "indelible barbarism." The celebrated **Thomas Arnold** (1795—1842), Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, and afterwards headmaster of Rugby, wrote a *History of Rome*, down to the end of the Second Punic War, a work that belongs more to the picturesque school than to the philosophic and scientific. In the department of modern history **Sir Archibald Alison** (1792—1867) achieved distinction for his *History of Europe* in ten volumes. It shows immense industry, but suffers from a defective style, while his Tory prejudice is not concealed in his estimate of men and the great movements of Revolutionary Europe. **Sir Francis Palgrave** (1788—1861) was the first historian who applied the modern method of treatment, and thorough research among early records, to the early history of Great Britain. His *History of the Anglo-Saxons* appeared in 1831, followed by a great work, *The Rise and Progress of the English Commonwealth* (1832), and twenty years later appeared the first volume of his unfinished *History of Normandy and England*, which has been superseded by Freeman's later and more exhaustive work.

2. **Thomas Carlyle** (1795—1881), the most remarkable prose writer of the nineteenth century, was born at Ecclefechan, Dumfriesshire. His father, James Carlyle, a stonemason, was a stern, rugged, and very independent-minded man; he taught his family of ten children that the main thing in life was work, and "incited them by precept and example to do it well." Carlyle spent his early years at Annan Academy, and when about fourteen years of age, he walked from his home to the capital, a distance of a hundred miles, where he entered the University of Edinburgh. He was not specially distinguished as a student, except for the enthusiasm he showed in the study of mathematics. His father was anxious that he should become a minister of the Scottish Church; but Carlyle did not fall in with his views, and on leaving the University

he became mathematical master in his old school at Annan, and subsequently taught in the parish (or grammar) school of Kirkcaldy. Here he met Edward Irving, who afterwards became a celebrated preacher in London, and formed a strong and abiding friendship with him. Later on Carlyle spent some time as a private tutor; and during these unsettled years he read widely, notwithstanding his gloomy prospects in life, and the despondency which too often oppressed him.

3. **Earlier Works.**—During this time Carlyle acquired a thorough knowledge of German, of which he subsequently made such splendid use, and which stamped its influence upon his thought and style. He was also occupied with articles and translations, the most important of the latter being Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* (1824), and a year later he published *The Life of Schiller*.<sup>1</sup> In Kirkcaldy he had made the acquaintance of Miss Jane Baillie Welsh, a doctor's daughter, and a woman of genius, character, and wit; in 1826 they were married, and two years later went to live on a small property of hers, Craigenputtock, in Dumfriesshire, a farmhouse which stands alone in the midst of a dreary moorland plateau nearly a thousand feet above the level of the sea. Here they lived for six years, Carlyle occupying himself with articles and reviews for *The Edinburgh* and other magazines, and in writing one of his most famous books, *Sartor Resartus* (*The Tailor Repatched*). In this work, perhaps the most characteristic of his fancies, the strange and fantastic figure of Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, professor of "Things in General," displays himself and expounds the "Philosophy of Clothes." The book is a serious criticism on every aspect of life, and is characterised by that kindly and abundant humour, so apparent in his earlier work, and at the same time by an attitude of antagonism to the general tendencies of the spirit of the age, an attitude of mind which Carlyle maintained to the end of his life. *Sartor Resartus* appeared first in *Fraser's Magazine*, and was not published in book form in England until 1838. The influence

<sup>1</sup> Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759—1805) shares with Goethe, with whom he occasionally co-operated in literary work, the honour of being the foremost man of letters of his age in Germany. He was distinguished as a poet, dramatist, and historian.

of Jean Paul Richter<sup>1</sup> is apparent, and the German tone of the book made it more or less distasteful to the British reader. The following passage is an example of his style:—

I asked myself: what is this that, ever since earliest years, thou hast been fretting and fuming, and lamenting and self-tormenting, on account of? Say it in a word: is it not because thou art not happy? Because the Thou (sweet gentleman) is not sufficiently honoured, nourished, soft-bedded, and lovingly cared for? Foolish soul! What Act of Legislature was there that thou shouldst be happy? A little while ago thou hadst no right to be at all. What if thou wert born and predestined not to be Happy, but to be Unhappy! Art thou nothing other than a Vulture, then, that fliest through the Universe seeking after somewhat to eat; and shrieking dolefully because carrion enough is not given thee? Close thy *Byron*; open thy *Goethe*.

Wearied with household drudgery, and depressed by the immense and unbroken solitude of Craigenputtock, Carlyle and his wife in 1834 went to London and took a house in Chelsea, where they were destined to spend the remainder of their lives.

4. **The French Revolution.**—Carlyle now busily occupied himself with his *French Revolution*. But a dreadful misfortune happened to him in the loss of the manuscript of the first volume; it was lent to John Stuart Mill, and a servant used it to light fires. Carlyle began on the work again, and day after day faced the task for two months until, with "mind weary and body very sick," he was obliged to rest. The book appeared in 1837. Of it, Carlyle said to his wife: "I know not whether this book is worth anything, nor what the world will do with it, or misdo, or entirely forbear to do, as is likeliest; but this I can tell the world: you have not had for a hundred years any book that comes more direct and flamingly from the heart of a living man." It was read with the greatest eagerness and admiration everywhere, and especially in America: "our young men," said Emerson, "say yours is the only history they have ever read." The brilliance and aptness of the metaphors, the truth and fitness of the epithets, struck every reader. Robespierre is "the sea-green incorruptible"; Mirabeau is "the swart, burly-headed Mirabeau"; Marat is "the large-headed

<sup>1</sup> Jean Paul Friedrich Richter (1763—1825), usually known by his pen-name of "Jean Paul," was a voluminous German romance-writer of the satirico-humorous order. He is Germany's greatest humorist, and, as a master of pathos, De Quincey placed Jean Paul above Sterne.



dwarfish individual, of smoke-bleared aspect." The history displays throughout what Emerson called Carlyle's "stereoscopic imagination." The book is in fact a great epic-dramatic poem, filled with an intense life, and teeming with thrilling incidents and tragic figures depicted with a realism hitherto unknown in historical literature. The third volume, *The Guillotine*, is a masterpiece of sustained energy, as Carlyle realises in a series of "flame-pictures" the rapid development of the "Reign of Terror" with its carmag-nole<sup>1</sup> dance, its teeming prisons and rolling tumbrils—the awful birth of "Sansculottism"<sup>2</sup>—the frightfullest thing ever born of time." The following passage gives a picture of Danton<sup>3</sup>:—

See Danton enter; the black brows clouded, the colossus figure tramping heavy; grim energy looking from all features of the rugged man! Strong is that grim Son of France and Son of Earth; a reality and not a formula he too: and surely now if ever, being hurled low enough, it is on the Earth and on Realities that he rests. "Legislators!" so speaks the stentor voice, as the newspapers yet preserve it for us, "it is not the alarm cannon that you hear; it is the *pas-de-charge* against our enemies. To conquer them, to hurl them back, what do we require? *Il nous faut de l'audace, et encore de l'audace, et toujours de l'audace*, to dare, and again to dare, and without end to dare!"—Right so thou brawny Titan; there is nothing left for thee but that. Old men, who heard it, will still tell you how the reverberating voice made all hearts swell, in that moment; and braced them to the sticking-place; and thrilled abroad over France, like electric virtue, as a word spoken in season.

5. **Other Works.**—For the next three years Carlyle was much engaged in the preparation of lectures which he delivered in London on German literature and historical subjects. The series on *Heroes and Hero-Worship* was published in book form in 1841. It became very popular from the vigour of its style and its stimulating method of treatment. Carlyle's view of history is what is known as the "Great Man Theory," which has given rise to a good deal of debate. By it is meant that biography is the foundation of history, and that all great causes and great changes in human conditions have their centre and origin in one great man. In 1843 appeared *Past and*

<sup>1</sup> The *carmagnole* was a popular dance and song among the French revolutionists.

<sup>2</sup> A *Sans-culotte* meant literally "one without breeches." It was the name given to the poorer and more violent class among the revolutionaries.

<sup>3</sup> One of the greatest orators of the Revolution; guillotined at Paris in 1794.

*Present*, one of the most popular of his books, in which Carlyle goes back to the Middle Ages and gives us a delightful picture of monastic life in St. Edmundsbury under the rule of Abbot Hugo and Abbot Sampson as chronicled by Jocelin of Brockeland. Contrasted with this is the description of the condition of England in the early nineteenth century, in which Carlyle takes up an uncompromising attitude towards the political tendencies of the age.

6. **Lives of Great Men.**—Carlyle next occupied himself with *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, which he published in 1845 with a characteristic running commentary by himself, which embodies the views advanced in *Heroes and Hero-Worship*. The commentary is full of fine passages and vividly painted scenes. After his *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (1850) and his *Life of John Sterling*<sup>1</sup> (1851), one of the best biographies in the English language, he addressed himself to his *History of Frederick II.* (Frederick the Great)—a book which appeared in the years from 1858 to 1865. In this book Carlyle proved himself a great military historian. He spared no pains; he dug out every trustworthy record; he buried himself in musty manuscripts and dusty books; he visited and walked over every battlefield of Frederick's wars; and his knowledge of military affairs and military science proved so exact that his description of the great battles came to be a text-book in the Prussian army. The book is in some respects his greatest work; but it displays some of the worst features of his style, and it has not the attractiveness, energy, and glow of *The French Revolution*. In the year 1866 Carlyle was elected Lord Rector of the University of Edinburgh. He was enthusiastically received when he went down to deliver his inaugural address (a speech full of wisdom and true insight); but while he was there, his wife died suddenly of heart disease in London, as she was riding in her carriage. His *Reminiscences* are one long and despairing wail over her death and the loss of opportunities of showing her some marks of tenderness and love. Unsought honours now came to Carlyle. He was offered by Mr. Disraeli, on behalf of the Queen, the Grand Cross of

<sup>1</sup> John Sterling (1806—1844) belonged to what Mrs. Browning called "the class of respectable poets." He was also an essayist and critic of some repute in his own day, but is now chiefly remembered by Carlyle's biography.

the Bath and a pension, but these he respectfully declined; he accepted, however, the Prussian Order of Merit for his *History of Frederick II.*, who was the founder of the Order. Worn out by long years of toil, depressed by ill health and by the death of his wife, Carlyle passed away peacefully on February 5th, 1881. He might have been buried in Westminster Abbey; but his own desire sent his body to the lone country churchyard of Ecclefechan.

7. **His Style and Work**.—The style of Carlyle has been often described as "German" or an "imitation of German." It was not an imitation of anything, though the German language and literature gave colour to his thought and writing. He was much too original a man to imitate any one, and his style was rooted deep in his own character and personality. The fact is that Buffon's<sup>1</sup> celebrated saying—"Le style, c'est l'homme même"—is true in the highest degree of Carlyle. The son of a stern, rugged, sturdy, and self-reliant father, with a great gift of picturesque speech and a still greater gift of silence, Carlyle shaped and evolved for himself a rugged and unique style, jerky, spasmodic, often eloquent, and even musical, and standing at the opposite pole to simplicity, directness, and form. So wanting in form is it that Taine says: "He confounds all styles, jumbles all forms, heaps together pagan allusions, Bible reminiscences, German abstractions, technical terms, poetry, slang, mathematics, physiology, archaic words, neologies." In *Sartor Resartus* it appears as an "uncouth jargon," full of twists and paroxysms, shot with lurid lights, lit up with daring and brilliant metaphors, but always fitted to the subject, always adequate to the thought that was moving the writer, and never dull or monotonous. It is character guided by a great intellect that speaks through every sentence. His perceptive and descriptive power is of the highest order; his power of historic presentment—whether of a person, an event, or a landscape—is not excelled by any historian. The intensity of his feeling, his volcanic enthusiasm, his scorn and indignation, his gigantesque laughter and abundant humour, and his deep and

<sup>1</sup> Buffon (1707—1788) was a distinguished French naturalist. He was admitted to the French Academy in 1753, and then delivered as his inaugural address the famous *Discours sur le Style*.

true tenderness show themselves in every book he has written. The style of his early work (*The Life of Schiller*) and of his first contributions to *The Edinburgh Review* differs but little from the ordinary style of Jeffrey or Lockhart ; only it is firmer, clearer, more vivid. From *The Life of Schiller* to his *Life of Frederick the Great* he went on developing and perfecting a style which became afterwards known to readers as "Carlylese."

7A. **His Philosophy.**—It is difficult, if not impossible, to define what the philosophy of Carlyle was. It was of a negative kind, nebulous and vague. Filled with a divine discontent with the accepted order of things and the materialistic tendencies of the day, he addressed himself with fiery zeal and energy to raise men to a higher level of thought and action. He had much of the Puritan spirit in him—a figure not unlike one of the Hebrew prophets of old declaiming against a nation for its blindness, its folly, its selfishness, and stupidity. His hatred of cant, hypocrisy, and falsehood ; his contempt of what was mean, hollow, and deceitful in public life ; and his insistence on a higher ideal of truth, uprightness, and self-sacrifice were reiterated again and again in language glowing with an intense fervour, and a passionate sincerity, that profoundly affected the nation at large. Great as Carlyle was as an historian in his own special way, and great as a literary critic, he was greater still as a personal force and stimulating influence on the mind and thought of his age. With all his faults of language and style—the grotesqueness, the solecisms, the distortion of epithet and imagery—there is no mistaking the force, directness, and stern reality of his message, and his absolutely irreconcilable attitude of mind towards any compromise with insincerity, falsehood, and wrong.

(i) "Though not the safest of guides in politics or practical philosophy, his value as an inspirer and awakener cannot be over-estimated. It is a power which belongs only to the highest order of minds, for it is none but a divine fire that can so kindle and irradiate. The debt due to him from those who listened to the teachings of his prime, for revealing to them what sublime reserves of power even the humblest may find in manliness, sincerity, and self-reliance, can be paid with nothing short of reverential gratitude. As a purifier of the sources whence our intellectual inspiration is drawn, his influence has been second only to that of Wordsworth, if even to his."—  
JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

(ii) "When all is said of his dogmatism, his petulance, his 'evil



behaviour,' he remains the master-spirit of his time, its censor, as Macaulay is its panegyrist and Tennyson its mirror. He has saturated his nation with a wholesome tonic, and the practice of any one of his precepts for the conduct of life is ennobling. More intense than Wordsworth, more intelligible than Browning, more fervid than Mill, he has indicated the pitfalls in our civilisation. His works have done much to mould the best thinkers in two continents, in both of which he has been the Greatheart to many pilgrims."—JOHN NICHOL.

(iii) "The philosophical influence of Carlyle has not been less than his literary influence, and it has been wholesomer. . . . He gave check to the supremacy of the commonplace. . . . He introduced thought to more than one of those truths which are lost under logical apparatus or hidden by social conventions."—EDMOND SCHÉRER.

8. **Thomas Babington Macaulay** (1800—1859), essayist, lawyer, historian, was born at Rothley Temple, in Leicestershire, the son of Zachary Macaulay, a London merchant, who fought long and hard with his friend Wilberforce<sup>1</sup> for the abolition of slavery in the British Colonies. He was remarkably precocious as a child, and read everything he could lay his hands on—a habit he continued to the last year of his life. After some years of education in private, he was entered in 1818 as a commoner of Trinity College, Cambridge, of which society he was elected Fellow in 1824. His literary career may be said to have commenced in the year 1825 with the appearance in *The Edinburgh Review* of his celebrated essay on Milton. The essay excited the enthusiasm of Jeffrey, the editor, who wrote to him: "The more I think the less I can conceive where you picked up that style." He became the most brilliant contributor to *The Edinburgh*, to which his pen at that time gave a needed impetus. Macaulay was called to the Bar in 1826; and in the year 1830 the great Whig politician Lord Lansdowne presented him with the pocket borough of Calne, in Wiltshire.

9. **Public Career.**—Macaulay soon established his reputation as an orator of the front rank, and was noted in society for his great conversational powers. In the year 1834 he was appointed member of the Supreme Council of India, and President of the Law Commission; his chief work in the latter capacity was done in connection

<sup>1</sup> William Wilberforce (1759—1833) procured the passing of a bill for the abolition of the slave trade in 1807. It was also largely owing to his efforts that the Slave Emancipation Bill was passed in 1833—a month after his death.

with the Indian Penal Code, which was largely due to him—a code that ranks among the best in the world. He returned to England in 1838, and was elected member for Edinburgh—a seat which he retained until 1847. In that year the Edinburgh voters rejected him, chiefly because he was unable to sympathise with their theological views. He declined to stand again; but the electors of Edinburgh, in a fit of sorrow and repentance, offered him in 1852 the seat without the necessity of a contest. In the year 1842 he published his spirited *Lays of Ancient Rome*, and in the next year he was induced, somewhat against his own will, to republish his *Essays* from *The Edinburgh Review*. The first two volumes of his greatest work—*The History of England from the Accession of James the Second*—appeared in 1848; the next two in 1855; and the fifth volume in 1861—two years after his death. So great was the enthusiasm created by the publication of this history that each volume on its first appearance sold by thousands a week. The students of the University of Glasgow elected him Lord Rector in the year 1849, and in the year 1857 he was created a peer by the title of Baron Macaulay of Rothley. He died on December 28th, 1859, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. His *Life*, by his nephew, Sir George Otto Trevelyan, is one of the best biographies in the language. It shows Macaulay as he was, an Englishman of the best type, and possessing both in public and private life all the highest qualities of his race.

10. **His History.**—His greatest work is *The History of England*. It is only a fragment of what he intended to execute; but it is a very noble fragment. His idea of history was that “it should invest with the reality of human flesh and blood beings whom we are too much inclined to consider as personified qualities in an allegory; call up our ancestors before us with all their peculiarities of language, manners, and garb; show us over their houses, seat us at their tables, rummage their old-fashioned wardrobes, explain the uses of their ponderous furniture.” In short, his *History* was to be as readable as the most readable work of fiction. “I shall not be satisfied,” he says in a letter, “unless I produce something which shall for a few days supersede the last fashionable novel on the tables of young ladies.” And this idea he realised with the most

complete success. His omnivorous reading, his wonderful and ready memory, his command of vast stores of historical knowledge, his power of striking and picturesque illustration, aided by his energetic and vivid style, all helped him to produce a series of the most brilliant pictures that had ever been offered to the English reader. Every minute but striking fact which he had picked up in his omnivorous and out-of-the-way reading, every fragment of historic truth, every petty characteristic of an historic personage, is seized, annexed, put into its right place, and worked up into a brilliant mosaic which not even the most imaginative novelist could rival. His epithets are always fitting and characteristic, and the large amount of picturesque detail at his command gives a realistic quality to his narrative that few historians have ever rivalled. One fault of the book is the vastness of the scale on which it is written; he took five volumes to tell the story of fifteen years. Life is too short either to read or write histories constructed on such a scale as this. He is at times inaccurate; and his likes and dislikes are very manifest. His animus towards the Stuarts gave bitter offence to many of the old Tory party; and his prejudice against Marlborough, Penn,<sup>1</sup> and Dundee<sup>2</sup> led him at least into injustice. But these faults are by no means characteristic of his *History*; his standard for public men was a high one, and he could not conceal his dislike of those whom he considered knaves and fools. He shows, also, too much of the force, vigour, and partiality that characterise the special pleader, and not sufficient of the philosophy and reflection that should characterise the judge. He is, moreover, too declamatory, too insistent, and is wanting in that moderation, serenity, and repose necessary for a calm and supreme judgment on men and events.

11. **Essays and Poems.**—As an essayist Macaulay ranks as high in popular estimation as he does as an historian. The *Essays* are widely read, both for their great attractiveness of style and for their own intrinsic merit. It has become somewhat the custom with some critics to decry them for the want of those finer qualities of thought and style and aesthetic taste, which characterise the best literary and historical criticism of the present day. In

<sup>1</sup> William Penn, the Quaker founder of the State of Pennsylvania.

<sup>2</sup> Better known as John Graham of Claverhouse.

these qualities Macaulay was deficient; but the *Essays* are, in their own way, the best of their kind, and are amply sufficient to give Macaulay high rank in the literature of the nineteenth century. His subject is drawn in firm and striking outline, and filled in with interesting and attractive details. He throws on it brilliant sidelights from contemporary records, and produces a clear, bold, and effective portrait or picture of a person or event. In the *Essays* he covers a wide and varied field, and shows an unrivalled power and grasp in the marshalling of multitudinous facts and details, while the narrative moves swiftly by the force of his abundant energy and the irresistible swing of his style. He wrote, however, from a party point of view, especially in the earlier essays, and the controversial spirit is too apparent; this to some extent has injured him in the minds of many readers. But he is candid, open, and honest in his criticism, if unduly severe on the men of bygone times. It should be remembered, too, that many of the essays were written in haste and under the pressure of exacting duties as a prominent politician. His poems are remarkable for their vigour, terseness, and directness, which yet never sacrifice the picturesque. The metre is that of the ordinary ballad, but it is managed with greater power, skill, and rapidity of movement than is to be found in the older British ballads. On the other hand, the rhetoric is often too apparent, and the rhythm wanting in variety; hence a tendency in his verse to become monotonous and mechanical, like the regular tramp of carefully drilled troops. The *Lays of Ancient Rome* (1842) form, however, a splendid modern tribute to the greatness and virtues of the Roman people.

His *Lays*, like the old ballads, stir the heart "as with the sound of a trumpet." Matthew Arnold called them "pinchbeck Roman ballads"; but the words of Mrs. Browning are much nearer the truth: "If we cannot look for the best and highest poetry in the *Lays*, we can look for and we shall find stirring rhythm, vigorous and picturesque language, strong human feeling. For a certain age, they are the best poetry to read and to commit to memory."

12. **His Style.**—Macaulay's style is the perfection of clearness, for ambiguity was foreign to the nature of his mind. His habit of public speaking gave him an excellent insight into the understanding of the average man; and this is one of the



chief causes of his incomparable lucidity. One principle guided him in writing: that a special and striking fact takes a firmer hold on the mind than a general reflection. Hence his style is direct, clear, manly, and unaffected. It is full of life, vigour, and animation, and into the dry bones and dust of history he infuses a spirit and vitality that make the age live again with all the varied colour and movement of people, incidents, and scenes. The devices most employed by Macaulay are apt comparison, striking antithesis, and varied statement. Opulence of knowledge, wealth of illustration, animation, movement, and sequence of thought—these qualities he displayed to a quite unparalleled degree. The faults of his style are too manifest: they lie on the surface. He is too fond of sharp contrasts to be an artist; he is too profuse with his illustrations; the rhythm of his sentence is stiff and somewhat monotonous; there is little flexibility in it, and it is wanting in sweetness of cadence and real charm. Again, he is too fond of short abrupt sentences, and of a succession of them, and the reader soon begins to feel the monotony of the movement. There is no subtlety, no mystery, everything is too plain and hard, while his periods are marked by a mechanical balance and a uniform regularity of measure.

(i) "Macaulay's style was eminently his own, but his own not by strange words, or strange collocation of words, by phrases of perpetual occurrence, or the straining after original and striking terms of expression. Its characteristics were vigour and animation, copiousness, clearness, above all, sound English, now a rare excellence. His copiousness had nothing tumid, diffuse, Asiatic: no ornament for the sake of ornament. As to its clearness, one may read a sentence of Macaulay twice, to judge of its full force, never to comprehend its meaning."—DEAN MILMAN.

(ii) "Macaulay was a master of the *mise-en-scène*, such as we never had before. It is rather a French than an English quality, and has been duly appreciated in France. . . . No historian before him ever regarded his task from the same point of view, or aimed with such calm patience and labour at the same result. . . . No historian ever devoted such care to the grouping of his materials. He re-planned and re-wrote whole chapters with ungrudging toil."—COTTER MORISON.

(iii) "He makes his recollections still more precise by descriptions and statistics; he notes colours and qualities; he has a passion for exactness; his descriptions are worthy both of a painter and topographer; he writes like a man who sees a physical and sensible object, and who at the same time classifies and weighs it."—TAINÉ.

13. **Henry Hallam** (1777—1859), one of the greatest English historians of the nineteenth century, was born at Windsor and educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford. He was called to the Bar, but after a short practice he was appointed to a Commissionership of Stamps, the income from which, with his private means, enabled him to abandon law and devote himself to literary pursuits. He joined the ranks of writers for *The Edinburgh Review*, and his fine scholarship gave point to Byron's well-known line:—

Classic Hallam, much renowned for Greek.

His first work, *A View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages* (1818), is a survey of the development of society in the various countries of Europe from the fifth to the end of the fifteenth century, in which his wide knowledge and deep research are fully displayed. In 1827 his *Constitutional History of England* (from the accession of Henry VII. to the death of George III.) appeared, which called forth from Macaulay an able review containing an admirable appreciation of Hallam's merits as an historian. Ten years later he published his *Introduction to the Literature of Europe* (in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries), a work of great erudition and most patient industry. Remarkable as the work is, it is not so stimulating a contribution to letters as *The Constitutional History*, chiefly from the very nature of the qualities required to comment on the writers in so wide and varied a field. Though Hallam's views were nominally those of the Whig party, they are never obtrusive in his dealing with political matters, and no writer is more just, moderate, and impartial in his estimate of men and of the many debatable incidents in history. His style is grave and dignified, clearly showing the qualities of his mind; it is, however, wanting in vivacity, colour, and warmth of feeling. Hallam set an eminent example of patient research in the foundation of his work, and in this respect he was one of the earliest of the modern school of historians.

14. **William Francis Patrick Napier** (1785—1860), generally known as Sir William Napier, takes a high place as a writer by his work on the Peninsular War, and may be considered the greatest military historian that England has produced. A member of a very

remarkable family,<sup>1</sup> he was born at Celbridge, County Kildare, and entered the Royal Artillery in 1800, at the early age of fourteen. He served in many of the most important campaigns in the Peninsular War, and was present in the famous retreat on Corunna, conducted by Sir John Moore. He began his *History of the War in the Peninsula* in 1823. Southey had written a rather dull history of the same war; and to Napier it seemed that justice had not been done to the subject. The work took him sixteen years, and it was published in six volumes between the years 1835 and 1840. He also wrote a *Life of Sir Charles Napier*—his more famous brother, the conqueror of Scinde, and one of the greatest of England's generals. It is seldom that the qualities of a brilliant soldier are combined with those of an eloquent and brilliant writer; in Napier's case they were united in the highest degree. His style is, to use Milton's phrase, "simple, sensuous, passionate"; where the subject demands it, it is swift, sweeping, direct, rising with the passion and swing of the narrative into a vehement eloquence that gives him rank among the greatest masters of English prose. His own experience in the war ensures to his story a realism, a vividness, and a directness of touch that no outside writer could give. He is eminently just in his tributes to the valour of the French troops; but his animus towards Spain and the Castlereagh Ministry gives a certain colour to his work which lessens its value from a purely political point of view.

The following extract is taken from his description of the battle of Albuera<sup>2</sup> :—

Such a gallant line, issuing from the midst of the smoke and rapidly separating itself from the confused and broken multitude, startled the enemy's masses, which were increasing and pressing onwards as to an assured victory; they wavered, hesitated, and then vomiting forth a storm of fire, hastily endeavoured to enlarge their front, while a fearful discharge of grape from all their artillery whistled through the British ranks. . . . The fusileer battalions, struck by the iron tempest, reeled and staggered like sinking ships; but suddenly and sternly recovering, they closed on

<sup>1</sup> On his father's side Napier was descended from John Napier, the famous inventor of logarithms; and his mother was the noted beauty, Lady Sarah Lennox, daughter of the Duke of Richmond.

<sup>2</sup> Fought 1811; French under Soult defeated, but with heavy loss on both sides.

their terrible enemies, and then was seen with what a strength and majesty the British soldier fights. In vain did Soult with voice and gesture animate his Frenchmen; in vain did the hardiest veterans break from the crowded columns and sacrifice their lives to gain time for the mass to open out on such a fair field. . . . Nothing could stop that astonishing infantry. No sudden burst of undisciplined valour, no nervous enthusiasm weakened the stability of their order; their flashing eyes were bent on the dark columns in their front, their measured tread shook the ground, their dreadful volleys swept away the head of every formation, their deafening shouts overpowered the dissonant cries that broke from all parts of the tumultuous crowd, as slowly and with a horrid carnage it was pushed by the incessant vigour of the attack to the farthest edge of the hill . . . and the mighty mass, breaking off like a loosened cliff, went headlong down the steep: the rain flowed after in streams discoloured with blood, and eighteen hundred unwounded men, the remnant of six thousand unconquerable British soldiers, stood triumphant on the fatal hill!

15. **Edward Augustus Freeman** (1823—1892), the most voluminous historian of his age, was born at Writchley Abbey, in Staffordshire, and gained a scholarship at Trinity College, Oxford, of which society he was afterwards elected Fellow. For many years he lived the life of a country gentleman near Wells, in Somersetshire, where the larger portion of his historical works was written. He was appointed Regius Professor of Modern History in Oxford in 1884; he was a great traveller, and eight years later he died of smallpox in Spain. Of his numerous works, his most important are his *History of Federal Government* (1863), of which only one volume appeared; *The History of the Norman Conquest*, his greatest work and the result of twenty years' labour; *The Historical Geography of Europe*; and his *History of Sicily*, conceived on a large scale, of which but three volumes were published.

Freeman was an indefatigable writer, and all his work shows unwearied and patient industry in the accumulation of facts. But it suffers from an excessive use of them; he failed to sift them or to weigh properly their respective value. He was a keen politician, and in estimating past events he interprets them too readily from a modern political standpoint. His style, though clear and forcible, savours overmuch of the journalist, being too assertive, vehement, and eager to carry conviction; and it is marred by the vice of constant iteration.



16. **John Richard Green** (1837—1883), perhaps the most brilliant of the younger historians, was born at Oxford and educated at Magdalen School and Jesus College. The environment of his native city stimulated his historic sense, and he wrote some clever papers on its history before he took orders in 1860. For about nine years he worked in several parishes in London, during which time he contrived to do much literary work; but ill-health compelled him in 1869 to give up clerical duties. He had previously planned a history of the Angevin period, but being invalided he was obliged to abandon the idea and confine his efforts to *A Short History of the English People*, which appeared in 1874. Although written under distressing conditions, it shows no signs of depression of mind or spirits, and its success is one of the records of literature. As its title implies, it is a history of the English people, and not a history of the lives and character of kings. It is not, as he says himself, a "drum and trumpet history," but a record of the "constitutional, intellectual, and social advance of the nation itself." The *History of the English People*, an expansion of the smaller history, appeared in 1878-80; *The Making of England* (1882), dealing with the history of the country on a large scale, is brought down to 828; and his last volume—dictated to his wife—*The Conquest of England*, was published after his death, which occurred at Mentone. Green was a writer of fine genius, and his work displays a vivid imagination and great creative power. His *Short History* stands alone among works of the kind; and its defects are entirely outweighed by its distinctive merits, its rare charm, its brilliance and the vigour and energy of its style.

17. **Henry Hart Milman** (1791—1868), Dean of St. Paul's, was one of the greatest ecclesiastical historians of the century; his best known works are *A History of the Jews* (1829), *A History of Christianity to the Abolition of Paganism* (1840), and *A History of Latin Christianity* (1854-6), of which it was rightly said, "No such work has appeared in ecclesiastical literature."

**Alexander William Kinglake** (1809—1891) undertook at the request of Lady Raglan<sup>1</sup> to write *A History of the Invasion of the Crimea*, which was chiefly based on Lord Raglan's papers. This exhaustive historical work, one of the greatest of the century, is in eight volumes, and occupied the

<sup>1</sup> Lady Raglan was the wife of Lord Raglan, the British Commander-in-Chief in the Crimea up to 1855.

author twenty-four years (1863-87). In it he vindicates the military character of Lord Raglan, and his criticism of Napoleon III. is so severe that his work was prohibited from circulation in France during the Emperor's reign. Kinglake was also the author of *Eothen*,<sup>1</sup> a brilliant book of travel in the East.

**Thomas Henry Buckle** (1821—1862) was the first historian who devoted himself to the sociological side of history on scientific lines. His incomplete work *A History of Civilisation in England*, which is but an introduction to the subject, created an intense interest and was the cause of much controversy.

**William Stubbs** (1825—1901), who became Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, Regius Professor of Modern History in the University, and afterwards Bishop of Chester, was a great historical scholar, especially in mediæval chronicles and records. But his title to fame rests on his *Constitutional History of England* (1874-8); and he was the chief influence in the creation of the modern school of history in Oxford.

**Samuel Rawson Gardiner** (1829—1902) was also an Oxford scholar and devoted his life to his great work, *A History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate*, the outcome of the most patient industry and research, and (though written in a dull style) a valuable contribution to historical literature.

**18. Theologians.**—The nineteenth century was marked by an immense activity in the production of theological literature. Foremost among its contributors stands the name of **John Henry Newman** (1801—1890), one of the greatest English prose writers, who was born in London, the son of a banker. He entered Trinity College, Oxford, at the age of sixteen, and in 1822 was elected a Fellow of Oriel. He formed a close friendship with Edward Bouverie Pusey, Hurrell Froude, and John Keble; after taking orders he became in 1828 Vicar of St. Mary's, and was soon recognised as a noted preacher. Four years later, in a voyage to the Mediterranean, he wrote some beautiful hymns, the best known of which begins, "Lead kindly Light." In 1833 Newman and his friends began the "Oxford" or "Tractarian" Movement, the first note of which was struck by Keble in the summer assize sermon on National Apostasy. The *Tracts for the Times* were the organ of the movement, and Newman, its greatest force, wrote about thirty of them. His famous Tract 90, written in 1841, created such a sensation that the movement received a check; two years later he resigned his living, and in 1845 he was received into the Roman Catholic Church; thirty-four years later he was created Cardinal by Leo XIII.

<sup>1</sup> The word means "from the East."

19. **His Work.**—Newman's secession from the Anglican Church freed him from restraints and perplexities he had long felt, and on his return from Rome in 1848, after eighteen months' absence, he published *Loss and Gain*, a tale of another Oxford conversion in a remote way recounting his own. *Callista*, also a work of fiction, was published in 1856; it deals with the early Christian life of the third century, and tells the story of the conversion of the beautiful girl-sculptor, Callista, and is full of fine imaginative work and spiritual feeling. A controversy with Charles Kingsley in 1864 called forth one of the most famous books of the nineteenth century—the *Apologia pro Vita Sua*—which had a marked effect in creating a feeling of esteem towards Newman among his countrymen. Next year he wrote his longest poem, *The Dream of Gerontius*, a beatific vision with angels' songs, among them the well-known "Praise to the Holiest in the Height." In 1870 Newman published his *Grammar of Assent*, in which he essayed to establish the foundation of a philosophy of faith. He died at the Oratory in Edgbaston (Birmingham), where he had established a community of St. Philip Neri in 1848, and where he had passed the last forty years of his life. His sermons fill many volumes, and there is a marked difference between the earlier or Oxford sermons, with their restraint and severity of style, and the later, which are more rhetorical and impassioned, but marked by a splendid stateliness and purity of diction. His style is always clear and pure in its rhythm and phraseology, and its most striking characteristic is simple grace of movement. It is very easy to read; but it was very hard to write. Newman took the greatest pains with every paragraph and every sentence he wrote. "I often write chapters," he says, "over and over again. . . . My one sole and single desire and aim has been to do what is so difficult—that is, to explain clearly and exactly my meaning: this has been the sole principle of all my corrections and rewritings." Matthew Arnold, speaking of the *Anglican Sermons*, calls attention to their "religious music—subtle, sweet, mournful." This fine harmony of sound is characteristic of all his work; and his artistic grace, his subtle ease, his delicacy of taste, his purity and spontaneity of expression, combine to make Newman one of the greatest masters

of English prose, and nothing more perfect in style has come from the pen of any English writer. The following extract is from his essay on *The Idea of a University* :—

It is almost a definition of a gentleman to say he is one who never inflicts pain. . . . He has his eyes on all his company; he is tender towards the bashful, gentle towards the distant, and merciful towards the absurd; he can recollect to whom he is speaking; he guards against unseasonable allusions, or topics which may irritate; he is seldom prominent in conversation, and never wearisome. He makes light of favours while he does them, and seems to be receiving when he is conferring. He never speaks of himself except when compelled, never defends himself by a mere retort, he has no ears for slander or gossip, is scrupulous in imputing motives to those who interfere with him, and interprets everything for the best. He is never mean or little in his disputes, never takes unfair advantage, never mistakes personalities or sharp sayings for arguments, or insinuates evil which he dare not say out.

20. **Thomas Chalmers** (1780—1847), the greatest divine of the Church of Scotland in the nineteenth century, was educated at St. Andrews University, and ordained in 1803. On removing to Glasgow twelve years later, his oratorical powers as a preacher gained him a great reputation at home and abroad. He was a voluminous writer on theology, science, philosophy, and social subjects; he held the Chair of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews, and later that of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh. After acting as a leader in the great division in the Church of Scotland, which resulted in the foundation of the Free Church (1843),<sup>1</sup> he became Principal of the New College (Divinity), a position he held for the last four years of his life. His style as a writer is marked by great energy, force, and fulness of illustration; but it is often loose, turgid, and passionate, and in its superabundance of metaphor and in the choice and selection of words not seldom shows lack of taste. In character and intellect Chalmers was typical of the best of Scotland's sons.

21. Among the many theologians of the Church of England who achieved distinction, a noted name is that of **Richard Whately** (1787—1863). He was one of the many famous sons of Oriel College, Oxford, and having achieved a considerable reputation in the English Church for his force of character, vigour, and independence of thought, he was created Archbishop of Dublin

<sup>1</sup> The schism arose generally over the question whether the State had a right to control the Church, and particularly over the question of Church patronage.



in 1831. Here his reputation increased, and he took an active part in social affairs, especially in the domain of education. He was one of the founders of what is known as the "Broad Church" school, and was a strenuous opponent of the Tractarian Movement. Whately was a keen logician, a philosopher of the practical kind, with little imagination or speculative faculty; but his style is singularly lucid, and all he wrote is marked by cogent reason, abundant wit, and apt illustration. He is now chiefly remembered for his *Historic Doubts relative to Napoleon Buonaparte* (1819), in which he attempts to show the absurdity of Hume's contention with regard to miracles.

**Arthur Penrhyn Stanley** (1815—1881), another great leader of the Broad Church party, and the embodiment of its best culture, was educated at Rugby under Dr. Arnold (whose *Life* he wrote), and was the original of George Arthur in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*.<sup>1</sup> He was a distinguished student of Balliol College, Oxford, being subsequently elected Fellow of University College; and taking orders, he rose in the Church and became Dean of Westminster in 1864. He was a voluminous writer, and among his best known works are *Sinai and Palestine* (1856), the result of a journey to the East; *Historical Memorials of Canterbury* (1855); *Historical Memorials of Westminster* (1866); *Commentary on the Epistle to the Corinthians*—his chief contribution to theology; and his admirable *Life and Correspondence of Dr. Arnold*. Theology appealed to him mainly through its historical aspects, and he had a rare power of pictorial narrative, a vivid imagination, and a keen dramatic sense in realising and depicting the scenes and incidents of the past.

**Richard William Church** (1815—1870), Dean of St. Paul's, spent his childhood on the Continent, and was educated at Oxford, where he became a Fellow of Oriel. He wrote many theological works and sermons, and made some notable contributions to pure literature in his studies of St. Anselm, Dante, Spenser, and Bacon. He was closely associated with Newman and his friends in the Oxford Movement, of which he left a history, published after his death. He had a keen, penetrating intellect, sanity and sobriety

<sup>1</sup> A story of Rugby School by Thomas Hughes; one of the healthiest and most genuine stories of school-boy life ever written.

of judgment, and a refined taste; and all his work shows a mind of rare culture, and one given to noble and elevated thought.

22. **Philosophical Writers.**—In the history of philosophy, **Jeremy Bentham** (1748—1832) links the eighteenth century with the nineteenth. Educated at Queen's College, Oxford, he was called to the Bar, but did not practise. He devoted himself to philosophical pursuits, and is noted as the founder of what is known as the Utilitarian School of philosophy, whose axiom is that "Utility is the measure and test of all virtue." Bentham achieved fame by his works on jurisprudence, and he gave a great impetus to the modern reform in English law and procedure.

**Sir William Hamilton** (1788—1856) occupied for the last twenty years of his life the Chair of Logic and Metaphysics at Edinburgh. He was a great force in his own day, and exercised an immense influence on philosophical thought in Great Britain, and was the last of the notable names in the school of Scottish philosophers, amongst which are those of Dugald Stewart and Reid. One of his most celebrated disciples, and part-editor of his works, was **Henry Longueville Mansel** (1820—1871), who, after a distinguished career at Oxford, became Professor of Moral Philosophy and Ecclesiastical History in the University, and having taken orders was made Dean of St. Paul's in 1869. He published a small work on the philosophy of Kant in 1856; but his reputation is chiefly due to his *Limits of Religious Thought* (1858), in which he attempted by applying the Hamiltonian system of philosophy to define the provinces of faith and reason.

**William Whewell** (1794—1866), one of the most noted and distinguished men of his time, was the son of a joiner, who after a very remarkable career at Trinity, Cambridge, rose to be Master of his College in 1841. So great was his reputation and the mental qualities upon which it rested, that Sir John Herschel, the astronomer, said of him that probably "a more wonderful variety and amount of knowledge in almost every department of human inquiry was never accumulated by any man." He was a voluminous and most versatile writer; but his best known works are his *History of Inductive Sciences* (1837) and his *Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences* (1840).

23. The greatest name among the opponents of Hamilton, and one of the greatest thinkers of the nineteenth century, was **John Stuart Mill** (1806—1873), son of James Mill, a disciple of Bentham, and best known as the historian of India. From his infancy the boy was subjected to a course of severe mental training, and at the age of eight he had read a number of Greek prose-authors, and at twelve had covered a wide course in the classical literature of Greece and Rome. In mathematics, philosophy, and history the mental discipline was continued, all religion being excluded from the scheme of education. As he grew up Mill pursued his studies with great zeal and became a pronounced Utilitarian. The influence of the poetry of Coleridge and Wordsworth, and the friendship of Sterling and Carlyle, enlarged his views, and he gave a wider conception to the narrow creed of Utilitarianism as accepted by the immediate disciples of Bentham.

In pure philosophy Mill's greatest work is his *System of Logic* (1843), in which he expounds the philosophy of experience in contradistinction to the doctrine of necessary truths and intuition of the Hamiltonian system. In 1848 he published his *Principles of Political Economy*, a work remarkable, in the then unsettled state of the science, for its orderly arrangement, its wide scope, and comprehensive grasp; and although he failed in his aim to place economics on a fixed foundation, Mill's book, notwithstanding the many works of the same kind that have since appeared, still takes a foremost place in the literature of the subject. Among his other works, his *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (1865) was a vigorous attack on the doctrine of original intuition. The *Essay on Liberty* (1859) is one of the best ever written on the subject, and stands in the front rank in the domain of political philosophy. With great power and clearness of vision he shows how the personal freedom of the individual is consistent with the restraints necessary for the preservation of society in a civilised state.

24. **Sir Henry James Sumner Maine** (1822—1888) was also a foremost thinker of his time in the field of political philosophy. Educated at Christ's Hospital and Cambridge, he was called to the Bar in 1850, and twelve years later went to India as legal member of the Council. He returned in 1870, was appointed to

a professorship of law in Oxford, and eight years later was elected Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge. His special distinction lies in his work of tracing the evolution of modern law and social custom from the early institutions of primitive society. His *Ancient Law*, published in 1861, marked a new era in the influence it exercised on the teaching of jurisprudence in academic circles. In 1871 was published *Village Communities in the East and West*, in which Maine traced the similarity of communal societies of a primitive type as existing in India to those of the early Germanic races. His lectures on *The Early History of Institutions* (1875) dealt chiefly with the ancient laws of Ireland; and *Early Law and Custom* (1883) was a further exposition of his views on his favourite theories. His last published work, *Popular Government*, a collection of articles in which he gave mature expression to his anti-democratic views, well maintained his reputation.

25. The greatest influence exercised by any writer and thinker in the nineteenth century was that of **Charles Robert Darwin** (1809—1882), whose demonstration of the theory of evolution in the animal world has revolutionised the whole aspect of things in the domain of human thought. He was born at Shrewsbury, the son of a physician and the grandson of Erasmus Darwin (see p. 379)—himself a pioneer of the doctrine of evolution. From boyhood he showed an interest in natural history, and after an uneventful academic career at Edinburgh and Cambridge, where “he was more attracted by beetles than by books,” he took his degree in 1831. In that year he was appointed naturalist to the *Beagle*, a Government vessel sent round the world on a scientific cruise, and in this work Darwin was engaged for the next five years. This determined his future career, and he now settled down to a life of patient scientific research and systematic observation in the whole field of natural phenomena. He married his cousin, Miss Wedgwood,<sup>1</sup> and fixed his residence at Down, in Kent, where he spent a long, happy, and laborious period of forty years. In 1839 he published a narrative of his voyage round the world, which retains its popularity to the present moment. In 1859 appeared his epoch-marking work, *On the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection*. Perhaps no work ever

<sup>1</sup> Darwin's mother was a daughter of Josiah Wedgwood, the celebrated potter.



created such a sensation ; it was furiously assailed as contrary to the generally accepted doctrine of creation, and was so revolutionary that it was coldly received even in scientific circles. For the next two and twenty years Darwin pursued his investigations and published numerous works, chiefly on the habits of plants ; his second most notable book, *The Descent of Man* (1871), though equally sensational and revolutionary with *The Origin of Species*, called forth a less violent attack and criticism. No more candid, fair, and honest thinker ever wrote than Darwin. He knew the weaknesses in his own theories much better than did his critics ; he not only furnished them with their best weapons of attack, but showed them the "missing links" in his own armour. His style is purely scientific ; it is plain, direct, and unrhctorical ; his thoughts were entirely bent on giving expression to the fulness of truth, and on endeavouring to explain and carry conviction by the irresistible logic of facts.

26. **Miscellaneous Writers.**—Of the many writers who appear under this head we can deal with but a few. **William Cobbett** (1762—1835), one of the most vigorous and idiomatic writers in our language, was born at Farnham, in Surrey, the son of a small farmer, and was brought up as an agricultural day-labourer. On enlisting in the army, he was sent to Nova Scotia, where he rose to be sergeant-major, and after seven years' service left the army in 1791. After a short period of journalism in America, he returned to England in 1800, and two years later started *The Weekly Register*. Like his prototype Daniel Defoe, Cobbett was a born pamphleteer, and, by dint of endless patience, diligent reading, and tireless energy, he raised himself to be one of the chief political influences in Great Britain. A pronounced Radical, Cobbett was prosecuted and fined for libel several times ; and in 1809 he was imprisoned in Newgate for two years. In Newgate he enjoyed himself immensely—managing his farm from there, educating his children, and writing his pamphlets. He several times tried to enter Parliament, but did not succeed till 1832, when he sat in the new reformed Parliament as member for Oldham at the mature age of seventy. When a boy of eleven he fell in with *The Tale of a Tub*, and the reading of Swift's masterpiece was "the birth of Cobbett's intellect."

For thirty years he wrote something every week; and for these thirty years he never wanted readers. The best of his books are *Rural Rides*, an entertaining *English Grammar*, and a *History of the Protestant Reformation*. His style is vivid, vigorous, sometimes coarse, but always clear, direct, and forcible, supported by a masculine common sense and occasional good humour. A hard fighter, he loved to attack men, institutions, politicians, and statesmen. He uses the simplest Saxon words, and thought that "his popularity was owing to his giving truth in clear language." His style, it has well been said, is "the perfection of the vernacular made literary." The following reminiscence is of interest:—

I was trudging through Richmond in my blue smock-frock, and my red garters tied under my knees, when, staring about me, my eyes fell on a little book in a bookseller's window, on the outside of which was written "*The Tale of a Tub*, price 3d." The title was so odd that my curiosity was excited. I had the threepence; but then I could not have any supper. In I went and got the little book, which I was so impatient to read, that I got over into a field at the upper corner of Kew Gardens, where there stood a haystack. On the shady side of this I sat down to read. The book was different from anything that I had ever read before, it was something so new to my mind, that, though I could not understand some parts of it, it delighted me beyond description, and produced what I have always considered a sort of birth of intellect.

27. A most noted name in his own day was that of **Hugh Miller** (1802—1856), of Cromarty, a stonemason for fifteen years, bank accountant for six, and for the remainder of his life editor in Edinburgh of *The Witness*, a bi-weekly paper devoted to the interests of the Free Church in Scotland. In youth a keen observer of nature, he found his attention directly turned to geology in the daily pursuit of his work as a mason. His first important book was *The Old Red Sandstone* (1841), dealing with the fossil remains to be found in that class of rock, and a very remarkable production when we consider that Hugh Miller's scientific training was all self-acquired during the enforced leisure of the winter months, when he was unable to practise his mason's trade. His interesting autobiography, *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, appeared in 1854, and *The Testimony of the Rocks* was published in 1856, shortly after his death, due to a gunshot wound self-inflicted,

the result of an overtaxed and disordered brain. The impetus given to geological science by Miller's works was very great. This was chiefly due to his style, which is clear, lucid, spirited, and among the best examples in the literature of science in the quality of picturesque and vivid narration.

28. Another most striking and interesting figure is **George Borrow** (1803—1881). Born at East Dereham, in Norfolk, the son of a recruiting officer, moved about from place to place through the British Islands, even as a child was thus formed in him that Bohemian habit which has helped to enrich English literature with some of its most fascinating works. By the help of an excellent mother, he received some education; and, after two years at Norwich Grammar School, he was articled to a solicitor. But his thoughts and attention were on other things than law; and, having a marked aptitude for languages, he acquired a working knowledge of many European tongues, which served him in his wanderings at home and abroad. After some years of a very unsettled life, he became an agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and worked in St. Petersburg on translations, and through the Spanish Peninsula in the distribution of the Scriptures. In 1840 he married a widow lady of means, and in the next year appeared his *Zincali, or Gypsies of Spain*, which attracted little attention. In 1843 he published *The Bible in Spain*, which became "the book of the season," and made Borrow a literary lion and a great figure in Mr. Murray's house in Albemarle Street. *Lavengro*<sup>1</sup> followed in 1851; but, strange to say, this did not gain the success which it undoubtedly deserved. Six years later *The Romany Rye*<sup>2</sup> was published with a worse result. In 1862 his *Wild Wales* appeared, in which it is curious to note that Borrow does not touch upon gypsy life in the principality.

Borrow is one of the strangest characters in the history of literature. His personal appearance was most attractive. Of a tall, handsome, and commanding figure, hair grey in youth, brilliant complexion, and dark lustrous eyes, he had a singular power in overcoming the prejudices of the gypsies, and, knowing the language,

<sup>1</sup> "Word-master" or "philologist" in the gypsy tongue.

<sup>2</sup> "The gypsy gentleman."

he came to be on terms of great familiarity with them. He was the first writer in English that gave anything like a correct impression of the true character of this strange race. His work, too, draws a picture of the outdoor life of England on the eve of the change which has created the great centres of industrial activity, and covered the country with a network of railways. His books glow with vigour and motion, and, except when airing his philology or plunging into controversy over questions which he imperfectly understood, there is no dulness in his pages. Borrow's field of experience is a very wide one, and much of it is to be avoided by those who wish to keep themselves respectable. We are introduced, among his friends and acquaintances, to many sorry rascals ; but his world is, on the whole, healthy, natural, and kindly. Borrow's books are autobiographical, and he treats us to bursts of confidence, and plays on our trust with all the skill of a magician ; but he has all the true wizard's touch of elusiveness, tantalisingly exercised when his confidence is most wanted. A noted instance is his friendship with Isopel Berners, and it would be difficult in fact or fiction to parallel this incident—a beautiful workhouse girl, and with such a name, an author turning tinker, the fight in the dingle between him and the Flaming Tinman, with women acting as seconds, and the hero teaching his Amazonian friend the Armenian numerals as a sequel to the scene ! In all Borrow's works we take as much or as little as we choose ; but everything left is a loss, and the reader is all the poorer for the want of faith. The following extract from the appendix to *The Romany Rye* may serve as an illustration of the author's style, while it gives a curious picture of Borrow as drawn by himself in his "Lavengro" days :—

All this is a manifestation of the kindness and providence of God ; and yet he is not a religious person ; up to the time when the reader loses sight of him, he is decidedly not a religious person ; he has glimpses, it is true, of that God who does not forsake him, but he prays very seldom, is not fond of going to church. . . . Perhaps he is destined to become religious, and to have, instead of occasional glimpses, frequent and distinct views of his God ; yet, though he may become religious, it is hardly to be expected that he will become a very precise and straitlaced person ; it is probable that he will retain, with his scholarship, something of his gypsyism, his predilection for the hammer and tongs, and perhaps some



inclination to put on certain gloves, not white kid, with any friend who may be inclined for a little old English diversion, and a readiness to take a glass of ale, with plenty of malt in it, and as little hop as may well be—ale at least two years old—with the aforesaid friend when the diversion is over; for, as it is the belief of the writer that a person may get to heaven very comfortably without knowing what's o'clock, so it is his belief that he will not be refused admission there because to the last he has been fond of healthy and invigorating exercises and felt a willingness to partake of any of the good things which it pleases the Almighty to put within reach of His children during their sojourn upon earth.

29. As Borrow was a painter of the vagrant sides of English country life, so in **John Richard Jefferies** (1848—1887) we find the prose-poet of rural England. No writer, save Gilbert White of Selborne, has done so much to foster a love of the shady woodland and the open swelling down, and of the plants and birds and beasts that inhabit there, as has this son of an old yeoman family of Wiltshire; and by none has the magic of nature been more fully realised, or more lovingly and truthfully described. The story of Jefferies' life is uneventful: a boyhood spent in a quaint old farmhouse near Swindon—the farm which every reader of his books knows so well; a short career of journalism in the country and in London; and then death by consumption at the early age of thirty-eight. "Three giants are against me," he wrote—"disease, despair, and poverty." But in spite of all difficulties Jefferies stands unapproached, and possibly unapproachable, as a writer who (as has been written of another of Nature's prose-poets<sup>1</sup>) could describe and interpret "the seeming significance of Nature's appearances, their unchanging strangeness to the senses, and the thrilling response which they wake in the mind of man." To Nature—to the fields, the hills, and the waters—was the best of Jefferies' genius dedicated, and it finds most exquisite expression in *The Gamekeeper at Home* (1878), *Wild Life in a Southern Country* (1879), *The Amateur Poacher* (1881), and especially in *Wood Magic* (1881)—the titles of all of which sufficiently explain their contents. But Jefferies was also a faithful and loving historian of the human aspects of rural life, now in its most characteristic forms fast vanishing from England; and in *Hodge and his Masters* (1880)

<sup>1</sup> Henry David Thoreau (1817—1862), an American writer.

and in *Round About a Great Estate* (1880) he describes, with an intimate knowledge of every detail, the daily life of the farmer, the field-labourer, and the cottager, with their old-world customs and beliefs, which are so rapidly disappearing under modern industrial conditions and the spread of present-day education.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

---

### THE VICTORIAN NOVELISTS.

1. **Introductory.**—We have already seen that in the sixteenth century the drama formed the chief medium of literary expression, and the attempts at prose romance took little root in English soil. The fierce political and religious controversies of the seventeenth century gave rise to voluminous writing of a serious kind, which was followed by the degraded drama of the Restoration, and the atmosphere of neither was favourable to romance. The eighteenth century—with its social intercourse, its coffee-house conversation, its *Tatlers* and *Spectators*—saw the birth of the genuine novel in the works of Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett. In the last century the novel entered on its full sovereignty, especially in the field of romance, and held its sway to the close without any sign of loss to its supremacy. Its influence has permeated all grades of society; it has treated of every phase of social life; it has depicted all sorts and conditions of men; it has pitched its scenes in every clime and in every age from the dawn of history until now, restoring the past with vivid realism, and foreshadowing at times the progress of science and human invention by apocalyptic visions into futurity. With an influence so far-reaching and so wide it is not our province here to deal; but some measure of it may be grasped from our treatment of the more prominent writers of fiction of the period, who have attained distinction in their respective fields.

2. **Thomas Love Peacock** (1785—1866), the friend of Shelley, is an interesting figure in the literary history of the first half of the nineteenth century. He was born at Weymouth, the son of a

London glass-merchant, and from boyhood he pursued his own studies, and became a fine scholar. He served in the East India Company's office for about thirty-seven years, and retired on an annual pension of over £1,300. Peacock wrote a good deal of verse, the best of which appears in his novels; but it is upon the latter that his fame almost entirely rests. Of these, *Nightmare Abbey* (1818) has Shelley for its hero; but his most noted work of fiction is *Crotchet Castle* (1831); his last work, *Gryll Grange*, appeared in 1860. His vein is decidedly satirical, enlivened by quaint humour, fantastic imagery, oddities, and whimsicalities that remind us of Sterne. His personal predilections appear in every book he wrote, and few authors display their likes and dislikes to men, institutions, and things more delightfully and candidly than Peacock; he despises literary men, he hates modern progress, and he detests Germans.

Two notable specimens (both from *Nightmare Abbey*) of Peacock's skill in verse are the fine drinking song entitled *The Men of Gotham*, and a biting parody of Lord Byron, beginning "There is a fever of the spirit."

3. **Novels of Adventure.**—In the writing of sea novels Smollett had many disciples in the nineteenth century, and the first to achieve distinction was **Frederick Marryat** (1792—1848). He was born at Westminster, became a midshipman in 1806 under that gallant and dashing sailor, Captain Lord Cochrane, and saw much active service in the British navy down to 1824, when he commanded a vessel in the Burmese war. On retiring from the navy with the rank of captain in 1830, he entered on a very active literary career as a writer chiefly of sea stories, in which he depended upon his long experience as a naval officer for scenes and incidents on board and ashore. So successful were his books that he made over £20,000 by their sale. His tales are of stirring adventure, and are remarkable for their broad humour, often amounting to farce, in which he follows Smollett, but with more urbanity and less coarseness. His books were the delight of a past generation, and most young (and many older) readers will long be interested in the stories of *Peter Simple* (1834), *Jacob Faithful* (1834), *Mr. Midshipman Easy* (1836), and *Japhet in Search of a Father* (1836).



**Michael Scott** (1789—1835) was another writer in the same field. He was born at Cowlares, near Glasgow, the son of a West Indian merchant, and after studying in the University, he sought his fortune in Jamaica as a planter. Returning to Glasgow, he published anonymously in *Blackwood* the stirring tale of *Tom Cringle's Log*, in which he drew freely on his West Indian experiences. *The Cruise of the Midge* followed, and the authorship of both tales was unknown until after his death. Scott shows great force and vigour in his descriptions, and paints with much richness and glow of colour the tropic scenery of the Indies. His tales are full of incident, and are sketched with lively and abundant humour, which make them eminently readable for their own sake, although they deal with a state of life afloat and ashore long since gone by.

Another writer of spirited adventure, much after the manner of the American novelist, Fenimore Cooper, was **Thomas Mayne Reid** (1818—1883), better known as Captain Mayne Reid. He was born in the County Down; in 1840 he went to New Orleans, and after an exceedingly varied career from schoolmaster to scout, entered the American army, and distinguished himself in the Mexican war, during which he was severely wounded. He returned to London, entered on a career of novel-writing with success, and produced over thirty tales. His experience as hunter and sharpshooter on the Indian frontier furnished him with the chief material for his numerous romances, which were at one time largely read; but his popularity, even with youthful readers, has now much declined. His first novel was *The Rifle Rangers* (1850), and his best known book is *The Scalp Hunters* (1851).

4. **William Harrison Ainsworth** (1805—1882) properly belongs to the school of romantic novelists of which Scott was the presiding genius. The son of a wealthy Manchester solicitor, Ainsworth prepared for his father's profession, but abandoned it for literature. He was the author of a number of novels, mostly historical, and of a very sensational kind. The interest in his tales is kept alive by variety of incident and a deepening of the mystery and intricacy of the plot, while he too often shows no limitation in his appeal to the credulity of the reader in the creation of impossible situations. He is capable of vivid narrative, as in the description of Dick Turpin's ride to York (*Rookwood*, 1834) and in the hero's escape from Newgate in *Jack Sheppard* (1839). In *Old St. Paul's* (1841), which shares with *The Tower of London* the reputation of being

the best of his novels, he describes with success the terrible days in London during the Plague and the Great Fire; but the final scene of the death of Chowles and Judith in the crypt of St. Faith's<sup>1</sup> is a simple concession to horror. The air of romantic heroism which, like Lytton, he throws round such characters as Dick Turpin and Jack Sheppard is more or less vicious; as are also his too frequent Hogarthian<sup>2</sup> pictures of low-class life and its evil surroundings. Ainsworth is deficient in humour and in the power of characterisation, while few writers show less facility in the art of dialogue wherewith to brighten their pages. That he had power is shown by his books being still popular—both those mentioned and others, such as *Windsor Castle*, *Guy Fawkes*, and *The Lancashire Witches*.

5. **Irish Novelists.**—A number of Irish writers of fiction achieved distinction in the first half of the nineteenth century, largely owing to the impetus given to authorship by the publication of *The Dublin University Magazine*. Of these, **William Hamilton Maxwell** (1792—1850) was early in the field as a writer of military novels. Born in Newry, he studied in Trinity College, Dublin, entered the army, and fought in the Peninsular wars and at Waterloo. He afterwards took orders, and lived in Connemara, the sport and scenery of which have been well described by him in *Wild Sports of the West* (1832). He was a voluminous writer, and his *Stories of Waterloo* and *The Bivouac* are perhaps his best title to fame. He was also author of a *Life of Wellington*.

6. **Charles Lever** (1806—1872), the most noted Irish writer of his time, was born in Dublin, and graduated in the University of his native city in 1827. Four years later he took a medical degree, practised as a physician for some time in various parts of Ireland and afterwards in Brussels. His earliest novel, *Harry Lorrequer* (1837), appeared in *The Dublin University Magazine*, and from the first number Lever's success as a writer of fiction was assured. This amusing book was succeeded in the same journal by *Charles*

<sup>1</sup> The crypt of St. Faith's was situated immediately under the choir of Old St. Paul's. It was used as a parish church up to the Reformation, and was destroyed in the Great Fire.

<sup>2</sup> William Hogarth (1697—1764), a great and original artist, is noted for his realistic pictures of the life and manners of the eighteenth century.

*O'Malley* (1840), his most popular work. A few years later he became editor of the magazine, a post he held for three years. A long series of novels followed from his pen down to 1872, the year of his death, which occurred at Trieste, where he was serving as British Consul. Most of Lever's earlier novels are tales of military adventure, dealing chiefly with the generation preceding his own, in which he depicts in a very spirited manner the reckless, dashing Irishman in the campaigns of love and war by land, after the manner of Marryat's heroes at sea. The tone of Lever's novels is eminently healthy; but the incidents are often too farcical and follow in too regular sequence, and on these he depends too much for the success of his story. His fun is frequently exaggerated, and there has hitherto been too great a tendency to accept his characters as typical of the Irish race. The books of his middle and later period deal mostly with events of everyday life, and conform to the ordinary type of novel. *The Martins of Cro' Martin* (1848) tells the story of the famine and of the noted family of that name in Connemara. *Con Cregan* (1849) is not so well-known as it should be; it is a spirited novel of the *picaresque* type, in which we are taken over much ground in the old world and the new; but the career of the clever young scamp is throughout, too successful to be convincing. *The Dodd Family Abroad*, written in the epistolary form, is brimful of fun, with much wit and irony (not usual in his books), which the letters give him the opportunity of displaying through the idiosyncrasies of the writers. *The Dodd Family* can well compare with Smollett's masterpiece, *Humphrey Clinker*, which it somewhat resembles in general plot and character, though it covers a much wider field of travel and incident. Of art in the construction of his novels, or in style, Lever displays little. Full of buoyant spirits himself, he wrote out of their abundance, with all the rapidity and ease of a fertile brain and ready pen.

**William Carleton** (1794—1869), the son of a peasant in County Tyrone, is chiefly noted for his *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*. He wrote a number of novels describing various phases of the social life of Ireland, in which he deals with the "land hunger" and the potato famine with their attendant evils. It is by his shorter tales, however, that interest in Carleton is maintained. He had a keen sense of humour, and was excelled by no contemporary writer in his *genre* painting of the Irish

peasantry, though his descriptions are coloured at times to a point of exaggeration.

**Samuel Lover** (1797—1868), a man of great talent and versatility, became notable first as an artist in Dublin, and afterwards in London, where he achieved a considerable vogue as a public entertainer by his musical and other accomplishments. In 1831 he published *Legends and Stories of Ireland*; in 1837 *Rory O'More*; and his most popular work, *Handy Andy*, was issued five years later. Lover's writings are very amusing; they overflow with humour of the boisterous and rollicking kind; but the qualities of his characters are of surface depth, and he did his share in creating in the minds of the inhabitants of the sister kingdom the popular conception of the "stage Irishman."

**Gerald Griffin** (1803—1840) has a claim to mention as the author of *The Collegians* (1829), now better known in its dramatised form *The Colleen Bawn*, a story much appreciated by a past generation, and still popular as a drama, having been adapted for the stage by the once famous actor Boucicault. It is a terrible tale of a celebrated crime, the scene of which was the neighbourhood of Limerick, Griffin's native city.

**Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu** (1814—1873) was connected with the gifted family of Sheridan, his grandmother being a sister of Richard Brinsley (p. 368). Le Fanu commenced his literary career while a student in Trinity College by contributing to *The Dublin University Magazine*, which he afterwards owned and edited. He was called to the Bar, and did not practise, but devoted himself to literary work. His humour, which he mainly shows in his shorter pieces of prose and verse, collected and published as *The Purcell Papers*, has not the fulness and buoyancy of Lever and his school; it is more subdued, and has none of their extravagance. He wrote many novels, well constructed in plot, in all of which he shows a mastery over the terrible, the weird, and the mysterious. *The House by the Churchyard* is an able story of crime, the scene of which is placed in the Dublin suburb of Chapelizod. *Uncle Silas* is another powerful tale of human wickedness. In the midnight murder-scene at Bartram-Haugh, of which the intended victim is a witness, Le Fanu rises to a height of sheer horror hardly excelled by any such scene in English fiction.

7. **Lord Lytton** (1803—1873), one of the most versatile writers of his time, was born in London, the son of General Bulwer, and he adopted his mother's name, Lytton, on succeeding to her property of Knebworth, in Hertfordshire. Graduating at Cambridge in 1825, he married two years later, only to be separated from his wife in 1836 after an unhappy period of wedlock. He achieved an early success in his clever novel *Pelham* (1828), the hero of which is the incarnation of dandyism. This was soon followed by *Paul Clifford* (1830) and *Eugene Aram* (1832), in which he appeals to the sympathy and sentiment of the reader for a robber in the



former, and a murderer in the latter novel—*Newgate Calendar* type of stories, like Ainsworth's, which Thackeray satirised generally in the tale of *Catherine*, while he burlesqued *Eugene Aram* specially in *George de Barnwell*. It is, however, on the group of historical novels, sometimes known as the four "Lasts," that Lytton's fame will probably rest—*The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), *Rienzi, the Last of the Tribunes* (1835), *The Last of the Barons* (1843), and *Harold, the Last of the Saxons* (1848). These novels are full of interesting details of the various periods to which they refer, but in none of them does Lytton rise to the high level of Scott. He has not that comprehensive historic imagination, that air of verisimilitude, and that wide humanity which characterise the great Scottish writer of romance.

In *The Caxtons* (1850), *My Novel* (1853), and *What will He do with It?* (1859) Lytton deals with matters of everyday life; and, admirable as they are, they fall short of the best novels by the great masters of domestic fiction. *The Coming Race*, the title of which is self-explanatory, appeared anonymously in 1871, and has had many followers of a similar kind since. In his novels Lytton covers a wide and varied field; but his work is often disfigured by lapses into Rosicrucian<sup>1</sup> mysteries, magical wonders, and mediaeval lore. His qualities are of the brilliant, or clever and showy kind; he lacks depth, and is deficient in humour, though not in wit. His prose is wanting in purity and simplicity of style; he indulges in too much colour and rhetoric; and his thought is often marred by an artificiality of tone and expression. As a dramatic writer Lytton had a high reputation, and some of his plays still hold the stage. *The Lady of Lyons* and *Richelieu* were produced in 1838, and *Money* two years later. Of his poetry, *The New Timon* (1840) achieved notoriety by its attack on Tennyson, which brought forth in *Punch* a scathing reply from the latter.

In 1831 Lytton entered Parliament, was made a baronet in 1835, and was raised to the peerage in 1866. He had a high reputa-

<sup>1</sup> The Rosicrucians were a supposed secret society, said to have originated in the fifteenth century, who claimed for themselves the possession of occult wisdom and a knowledge of the mysteries of alchemy, etc.

tion as a speaker, but not in debate, on account of his defective hearing. Lytton was buried in Westminster Abbey.

8. **Benjamin Disraeli** (1804—1881).—Lord Beaconsfield, among the most distinguished figures in the parliamentary history of the nineteenth century, was celebrated also in the world of letters as the greatest political novelist of the age. Born in London, the son of Isaac Disraeli, who was the author of *The Curiosities of Literature* and other works, he was privately educated; and of the method pursued we are given interesting particulars in *Contarini Fleming* and *Vivian Grey*. He was "born in a library," he says, "and trained from early childhood by learned men who did not share the passions and the prejudices of our political and social life." He startled society with his first novel, *Vivian Grey* (1826), a book with all the faults of youthful authorship, but so clever and bright, so daring in its pointed and witty reflections on men and things, and so bold in its personal aspiration, that it met with a brilliant success. After a severe illness, Disraeli spent some time abroad, wandering, like Byron, through South Europe and the Levant; and the experience and knowledge he acquired in these travels he turned to account in a series of novels published after his return. *The Young Duke* (1831), though a somewhat inflated work, gives a remarkable picture of fashionable society; and *Contarini Fleming* (1832) has for its subject, as he says himself, "the development and formation of the poetic character." In it Disraeli strikes a more pronounced personal note, and is more reminiscent than in any other of his novels. In 1837 he entered Parliament, and in that year published *Henrietta Temple*, an inflammatory love-story, and *Venetia*, in which he attempted with questionable success "to shadow forth, though 'as in a glass darkly,' two of the most renowned and refined spirits that have adorned these our latter days"—Byron and Shelley. In the meantime he wrote two most sparkling political satires, *Ixion in Heaven* and *The Infernal Marriage*, among the most brilliant *jeux d'esprit* in the language, which may be enjoyed independently of their intention for their combined wit, irony, and audacity.

Perhaps his best novels are the well-known trilogy, *Coningsby* (1844), *Sybil* (1845), and *Tancred* (1847), written for the purpose

of propagating the ideas of the Young England Party, of which Disraeli was leader, and to mitigate the evils arising from the growing power, social and political, of the middle classes. *Sybil* is considered by some the finest of his novels, and it gives a brilliant picture of society in characters drawn from its varied grades; it shows the end of the old order of things and the beginning of the new; and his description of the condition of the working classes in the forties is drawn with a firmness and originality of touch, not excelled by any other writer dealing with the period. *Tancred*, a very characteristic and original work, is based on his Eastern experiences; in it he foresees our possession of Cyprus, and discloses a vision of our empire over India, both of which he lived to make realities.<sup>1</sup>

For two and twenty years he was silent in literature, carrying out in practical politics the principles he had advanced in his novels. He became leader in the House first in 1852, Prime Minister in 1868, was made Earl of Beaconsfield in 1876, and reached the zenith of success in his extraordinary career in 1878, at the Congress of Berlin. In 1870 he published *Lothair*, with a cotemporary success seldom equalled; and in 1880 his last work, *Endymion*, appeared. In these are displayed a ripeness and maturity of judgment, and the wisdom of an accomplished man of the world not paralleled by any other works of the same class in the language. All his works are marked by boldness of fancy, audacity of imagination, wealth of colour and ornament, epigrammatic wit, keen insight, and a certain mastery over the secret springs that govern the action and passions of men.

✓ 9. **Charles Dickens** (1812—1870), by far the most popular writer of fiction in the first half of the Victorian era, was born at Landport, Portsmouth, where his father held a position as clerk in the pay department of the Navy. Two years after the birth of Charles, the family moved to London, and thence to Chatham, where they remained for some years. The father's salary having been reduced, the financial difficulties which invariably beset him became

<sup>1</sup> Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India (Kaisar-i-Hind) in 1876 and Cyprus was occupied by the British in 1878—both under the premiership of Lord Beaconsfield.

accentuated, and he was imprisoned for debt in the Marshalsea.<sup>1</sup> The future novelist had thus as a child a bitter experience of the grim realities of life in a debtor's prison; and the family difficulties also led to his being sent to work in a blacking factory at six shillings a week, during part of which miserable time he had to live in poor lodgings apart from his parents. Though these dark days left an indelible mark upon his impressionable nature, they also gave him an insight into the under-currents of London life, which he was afterwards to turn to such admirable advantage in his career as a novelist. His father's affairs improving, he was again sent to school, and after a time was placed in an attorney's office; this he left to follow the occupation of a reporter for the press, which his father also adopted on retiring from the public service on a pension. His experience as attorney's clerk was of essential service to Dickens, as well-known scenes in *Pickwick* and other novels testify. As a reporter he was a great success; and, while he was serving as such in town and country, his keen, quick sense of observation stored his memory with scenes, incidents, and oddities of life for future use, and developed, too, those powers of steady application and rapid work which distinguished him throughout his career.

10. **Early Successes.**—Dickens early essayed original work, and the first of the series of papers now known as *Sketches by Boz* appeared in *The Monthly Magazine* in December, 1833. After a year he carried his contributions to *The Evening Chronicle*, run in connection with *The Morning Chronicle*, on the staff of which Dickens was then engaged. The sketches were soon numerous enough to publish in a collected form, and they appeared in two volumes in 1836.<sup>2</sup> He was now asked by Messrs. Chapman & Hall to supply the descriptive letterpress for a work on the adventures of a party of cockney sportsmen, the illustrations being by the artist Seymour. Dickens caused the plan to be altered, so that the illustrations should arise naturally out of the text, and the first number of *The Pickwick Papers* appeared in April, 1836. On the death of

<sup>1</sup> A prison in Southwark, used latterly for debtors, and abolished in 1849.

<sup>2</sup> Dickens received £150 for the copyright, and this he afterwards bought back for £2,000. The name "Boz" was the childish lisp of a younger brother for Moses, whom Dickens playfully so called, taking the name from *The Vicar of Wakefield*.



Seymour immediately afterwards, by his own hand, the services of Hablot K. Browne (Phiz) were engaged. The original scheme of the book was soon abandoned by Dickens, and the sporting idea quickly disappeared; a greater interest was thus given to the work by a wider and more general treatment of incident and character, than was possible when the theme was confined to the rural experiences of a set of cockney amateurs. The fame of *The Pickwick Papers* spread, and from four hundred copies of the first number the sale of the fifteenth reached forty thousand, and the name and fortune of Dickens were decisively established. The success of *Pickwick* is one of the great events of literature, and is all the more remarkable when we consider that the book was written by a young man of twenty-five. Its very novelty was attractive, for it violated all convention in want of plan or unity of structure; but the real charm lay in its abundant life and humour, in its drolleries and farcical incidents, in its high spirits, and in the knowledge it displayed of London every-day life and its whimsicalities of persons, places, and scenes. In no other book are there so many laughter-moving scenes that have stood the test of three generations of readers with so little loss of appreciation. The variety of humorous characters is as great as in any of his novels—the members of the Pickwick Club, Mr. Weller senior, Bob Sawyer and Ben Allen, Alfred Jingle, the Fat Boy, and many others; while Sam Weller stands among the few great immortals, like Falstaff and Sancho Panza,<sup>1</sup> who have added to the universal gaiety of nations.

11. **Literary Career.**—Dickens now entered on a career of great literary activity, which only ended with his death. His next novel, *Oliver Twist*, was commenced in 1837 in *Bentley's Magazine*, and was the first of the "novels of purpose," a type which he made famous, and which have since had so many successors. In *Oliver Twist* Dickens attempted in a spirit of sheer realism to depict low-class life—the criminal, the lost, the fallen. In exposing defects in the working of the poor-law system, he delivered an attack on officialdom in one of its worst forms—that of oppressing the young—and so rendered his first public service as a reformer

<sup>1</sup> The "round, selfish, and self-important" squire of Don Quixote in Cervantes romance of that name.

of abuses. The power of the book is undeniable; but the pathos and sentiment are at times somewhat strained. This, however, counts but little, owing to the strong current of tragedy running through the story; while the characters of Bumble, Fagin the Jew thief-trainer, the Artful Dodger, and Bill Sikes are so forcibly drawn that their names at once became synonyms for their respective types, and now take a leading place in the great canvas of Dickens's creations.

*Nicholas Nickleby* was commenced in numbers in April, 1838, and created a sensation by the picture it gave of Mr. Squeers's establishment, Dotheboys Hall, in Yorkshire, and in this Dickens exposed another real evil. The book is somewhat conventional in plot: it contains the scoundrel money-lender, the heroic nephew and would-be victim of his spite, the mystery of Smike, and the wicked group of aristocrats of the recognised stage type of his day. But cruel, miserable, and squalid as is the atmosphere of the Squeers establishment, it is refreshed and sustained by Dickens's irony and grim humour; and John Browdie is a healthy counteracting influence to the school environment. The theatrical incidents with the Vincent Crummies' Company are eminently real; in such circles Dickens was perfectly at home, and the scenes are described with the same sympathy and life-like touch as those in which Mrs. Jarley and Codlin and Short figure in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and Mr. Sleary's Company in *Hard Times*.

In 1840 a new work, entitled *Master Humphrey's Clock*, was commenced, in which Mr. Pickwick and the Weller family were again introduced, but not with success; the machinery was accordingly abandoned, and *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge* were run and republished as distinct tales. Many tears have been shed and much sympathy expended over Little Nell on the one hand, and adverse criticism passed on Dickens's treatment of the character on the other. Candid opinion must admit that the child is too idealised, that her sufferings are too prolonged, and the pathetic sentiment is carried to excess. Yet the realism of much of the book is beyond question; for the squalid intensity of the surroundings of Quilp, Sampson and Sally Brass, and the power and vigour shown in their creation, are only equalled in English fiction by Dickens himself in Fagin and his

crew; while the characters of Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness are among his happiest creations of human oddities. It is upon these and the itinerant purveyors of amusement on the roadways, rather than on Little Nell, that the interest of the book is likely to rest in the future. *Barnaby Rudge* is one of the two efforts of Dickens in the field of historical romance, and both are excellent; they are, however, but by-products of his special genius. The plot of *Barnaby Rudge* is on the whole well contrived, the ordinary characters of the tale being admirably linked with the Gordon riots; and London abandoned to the mob, and the burning of Newgate, are made to serve their purpose in harmony with the development of the story. Many of the scenes are painted with vivid reality; the persecutions of the mother through her idiot son Barnaby are carried to a pitch of painful intensity; and among treacherous double-faced ruffians, Dennis is a fitting companion for Jonathan Wild, or the John Silver of *Treasure Island*.

A trip to America in 1842 gave rise to *American Notes*, which brought Dickens into disfavour with the public across the Atlantic; and this was greatly intensified by his next novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit* (commenced in numbers in 1843), which severely satirised many American characteristics. This is one of the best of his novels, and proved very popular and remunerative. The comic and tragic features of selfishness and greed form the keynote of the book, and the whole Jonas Chuzzlewit episode is terrible but repellent melodrama. The book, however, contains some of the best of Dickens's humorous characters—the immortal Mrs. Gamp with her wonderful phraseology and perversion of speech, and her friend Betsey Prig; Mark Tapley, of the order of which Sam Weller is Grand Master; Mr. Pecksniff, the incarnation of hypocrisy under a thin veil of unctuous philosophy and humanitarian cant; Young Bailey and the Todgers' ménage; and Tom Pinch—most perfect of characters—blind to his own interests, but alive to, and touchingly eloquent on, the wrongs of others.

**12. Christmas Books.**—The first of Dickens's Christmas books, *The Christmas Carol*, with its delightful and pathetic figure of Tiny Tim, appeared in 1843, and was followed by *The Chimes* (1844) and *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845). These all added

to the popularity of Dickens, and helped to establish a position of friendliness and intimacy between him and the public, unexampled in the history of English literature. A year now spent abroad by him and his family resulted in *Pictures from Italy* (1846), and in the same year *Dombey and Son* was commenced in numbers. In this novel, as in the last, the dominant idea is a human vice—pride—and the suffering and punishment which it entails. With many this book has always been the most popular, and there are few indeed who fail to be touched by the pathos which clings round little Paul, doomed from infancy to an early death. Portions of the book, however, like certain parts of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, are unpleasant melodrama, at times hardly convincing, though redeemed by many fine scenes; but Captain Cuttle, Mrs. Pipchin, Susan Nipper, Mr. Toots, and Major Joey Bagstock are among the leading figures on Dickens's ample stage of mirth-provoking characters. Susan Nipper is one of the best domestics in English fiction; her tartness is only equalled by that of the treacherous and malignant Miss Miggs in *Barnaby Rudge*; but it is tempered by loyalty and good humour. *David Copperfield* commenced in May, 1849, and ran to the November of the following year. It is the greatest and most popular of his novels, and was the author's own favourite; for in it he was largely reminiscent of his childhood, and his early struggles for fame and fortune. The strong personal note undoubtedly adds to the attractions of the book; but beyond all this it has a unity, a finish, and a sense of proportion unequalled in any of his other novels. In the creation of new and striking characters, too, Dickens is at his best. Mr. Micawber stands in the front rank among the immortals; Uriah Heep yields place to few in a "rogue's gallery"; Mr. Dick and Miss Betsey Trotwood are among his best human curiosities; and the whole Peggotty household, with the tragedy gathering round it, rank among the best things in fiction. The one jarring note in the book is the episode of Rosa Dartle.

13. **Magazines Established.**—About this time Dickens started *Household Words*, which ran for some years, and was succeeded by *All the Year Round*, both of which he used as vehicles for his



serial novels. In 1852 *Bleak House* was commenced. It is a departure from the novel with a central figure, which he had hitherto mainly adhered to, with a chief plot of Lady Dedlock's secret, and an underplot—the Chancery suit. The book has its faults of dragging slowly at times; of undue concession to horror, as in the death of Krook; and of exaggeration, as in the Smallweed family. But these defects are redeemed by its many high qualities; and none of his novels excels it in the variety and breadth of treatment of its numerous and incomparable characters. Inspector Bucket is, with Mr. Noddy of *Martin Chuzzlewit* and Mr. Inspector of *Our Mutual Friend*, the great forerunner of the fraternity of detectives, who have since figured so largely in English fiction. Mr. Chadband is one of Dickens's most sanctimonious hypocrites, Mr. Guppy the most obsequious of vulgar cockneys, and Harold Skimpole, the incarnation of selfish vanity and dilettanteism, is, unlike Boythorn,<sup>1</sup> Dickens's one dangerous attempt at personal caricature.<sup>2</sup> The pathetic figure of Jo, the crossing-sweeper, is well drawn, and the sheer realism of Tom-all-Alone's is not excelled even by the description of Quilp's Wharf. Little Miss Flite and the Jarndyce group have their own colour and attractiveness; and in their misfortunes the novelist successfully satirised the crying evils arising from prolonged Chancery suits, as he chastised excessive and blind philanthropic zeal in the drawing of the Jellyby family. *Hard Times* commenced in *Household Words* in 1853, and in this book Dickens pillories an educational system which aimed at hard matter-of-fact results, to the neglect of the higher objects—the development of character, the cultivation of the moral qualities, and the proper training of the imaginative faculties. No more merciless impeachment of such a system was ever delivered. The influence of Carlyle is apparent; and the lurid background of an industrial centre, Coketown, is described with the same vivid reality as in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Notwithstanding its admirable character-drawing—Josiah Bounderby, the lying apotheosis of self-help, Cissy Jupe, Mr. Sleary, "thout man, game eye," the "Whelp," the pathetic figure of Stephen, and the gentle Rachel—there is much truth in the

<sup>1</sup> Walter Savage Landor.

<sup>2</sup> Leigh Hunt (see p. 497).

criticism that "*Hard Times* errs by its attempt to prove too much."

Dickens's next novel, *Little Dorrit*, commenced towards the close of 1855, again attacks officialdom in the Tite Barnacle family, and in the "how-not-to-do-it" of the Circumlocution Office—an excellent example of his special aptitude in names. How well deserved the ridicule was, the breakdown of the military supply service in the Crimean days fully showed, and the subject was a fit one for his satire. But the book is unsatisfactory; it is wanting in cohesion, the humour is at times forced, some of the characters are mere puppets, and Mrs. Clennam and Miss Wade are of the Rosa Dartle type. Yet the Marshalsea and its sordid, polluting atmosphere are powerfully described; the figures of Rigaud and Flintwinch are worthy of the brotherhood of Uriah Heep and Quilp, and Mr. F.'s Aunt is as memorable as her "milestones on the road to Dover."

*A Tale of Two Cities* commenced in *All the Year Round* in 1859, and is the second of his ventures in the field of historical romance. It is no demerit to the description of the Revolution days that it will not replace Carlyle's wonderful "flame pictures." The book is a successful *tour de force*, with a well-knit plot, and contains some of Dickens's best descriptive sketches, while the heroism and self-sacrifice of Sidney Carton make him one of the most effective figures in English fiction. The next novel, *Great Expectations* (1861), followed in the same magazine, and in this he returns to the narrative of personal adventure in the story of Pip. The opening chapter, with the account of an escaped convict, is an impressive piece of realism, one of the most powerful things he ever wrote; and the whole Magwitch episode is a brilliant stroke of genius. The book exhibits extraordinary power, but suffers at times from an artificiality of character and scene, as in the whole of the Miss Havisham incident, and in the Pockett family and their *ménage*. But Uncle Pumblechook, Joe Gargery, and Mr. Wemmick are among the least likely to be forgotten of the Dickens gallery of portraits, while Old Orlick strikes even more terror than Bill Sikes. Three years later appeared *Our Mutual Friend*, written under difficulties of bad health and shock from a

railway accident. Notwithstanding some fine descriptive writing, as the matchless riverside scenes, and notwithstanding the characters of Mr. Silas Wegg, Mr. Boffin, and the incomparable ruffian, Rogue Riderhood, the book is the least satisfactory novel Dickens wrote. The plot is both poor and improbable, and the character-drawing of the Veneering circle is the merest caricature.

The last of Dickens's works, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, was unfinished at his death (1870). It has the merit of a very effective plot, and the scenes in the London opium-den and at Cloisterham (Rochester) show that there was no real decline of power in Dickens, at the end of his long and most brilliant career. He had taken to giving public readings from his books, visiting the chief cities and towns in the United Kingdom, and in 1867 revisiting America for this purpose. He put his whole heart and soul into these readings, as indeed he did into all his work; but the strain proved too great, and there is little doubt that the labour and travelling involved in his public readings hastened his end.

14. **An Estimate.**—At his death the question of the greatness of Dickens and his future fame became one of controversy, and much adverse criticism has been passed on his work from that time until now; but a great deal of it is special pleading and beside the point, in seeking for features in his works which they were not meant to contain, and in searching for qualities in the author himself which he did not possess. No English writer owes less to his predecessors than Dickens, and there was no disciple on whom the mantle of his genius could fall. His imagination was most vivid and intense; his creative genius varied and inexhaustible; and in the number of his characters who have become household names, he is equalled by no other writer in the realm of fiction. It has been urged against him that his genius ran in the region of the odd, the grotesque, and the *bizarre*, and that his creations represent special types of vices and virtues rather than great human embodiments of these qualities themselves. But his creations are none the less real, and none the less attractive. It is true that much of his humour depends on oddities and idiosyncrasies of character, on drolleries of thought and expression, and on perversions of speech. But the flow of his humour is ever abundant and rich, and characters such as Sam

Weller and Susan Nipper give forth flashes of rapier-like wit, as brilliant as they are effective. The special social conditions which gave rise to Mrs. Gamp, Betsey Prig, and Tony Weller may have changed, but their human qualities remain the same under some other phase of existence. Hypocrites like Pecksniff and Chadband, swindlers like Montague Tigg and Mr. Merdle, scoundrels such as Uriah Heep and Squeers, criminals of the type of Bill Sikes and Orlick, still unfortunately abound amongst us. The springs of humour, too, still bubble in the London streets, by the river wharf, and by sleepy coast towns, as Mr. W. W. Jacobs has very well shown, since from all of them he has drawn plentiful supplies.

Dickens has been blamed, too, for his occasional want of taste, and for a tendency to lapse into sentimentality. This charge is to some extent true, and the faults arise from the very intensity of his feeling and sympathy with human suffering, and from his hatred for cruelty, oppression, and wrong. Had he exercised more restraint over his emotion and his imagination, the whole body of his work would have suffered; and we can excuse the excess for the abundance of all that is best within it. Taken as a whole, no body of work is purer, more healthy, or more kindly. Every line that he has written may be placed in the hands of a child. No writer ever had higher ideals of his duty towards the reading public. He has brightened the homes and enriched the lives of millions, and his legacy of all that is best in imperfect humanity is beyond measure and beyond price.

(i) "More diverse opinions have been expressed as to Dickens's mastery of that highest part of the novelist's art which we call characterisation. Undoubtedly the characters he draws are included in a limited range. Yet I question whether the range can be justly termed narrow as compared with that commanded by any other great English novelist except Scott, or with those of other literatures except Balzac. But within his own range Dickens is unapproached. His novels do not altogether avoid the common danger of uninteresting heroes and insipid heroines; but only a very few of his heroes are conventionally declamatory like Nicholas Nickleby, and few of his heroines simpler sentimentally like Rose Maylie."—A. W. WARD.

(ii) "The vitality of Dickens's work is singularly great. They are all athrob, as it were, with hot human blood. They are popular in the highest sense because their appeal is universal, to the uneducated as well as to the educated. Their humour is superb, and most of it, so far as one can judge, of no ephemeral kind. The pathos is more questionable, but that, too, at its



simplest and best, and especially when the humour is shot with it, is worthy of a better epithet than excellent—it is supremely touching. Imagination, fancy, wit, eloquence, the keenest observation, the most strenuous endeavour to reach the highest artistic excellence, the largest kindness—all these he brought to his life-work.”—FRANK T. MARZIALS.

15. **William Makepeace Thackeray** (1811—1863) was of a Yorkshire family, and his father and grandfather found a successful career in the service of the East India Company. Some time after his father's death, the future novelist returned to England in his sixth year, and was educated at Charterhouse, the Grey Friars of *The Newcomes*, and for a time at Cambridge, where he was the contemporary of Tennyson. He took no degree, but here he made his first literary efforts in writing for a college periodical named *The Snob*; among his contributions were some mock-heroic verses on the subject of Tennyson's prize poem, *Timbuctoo*. Thackeray had inherited a moderate competence (£500 a year), and this delayed his choice of a profession. After leaving Cambridge, he travelled on the Continent and spent some time at Weimar, where he met Goethe. Fortunately for literature and his fame, his fortune was lost, partly by a bank failure, and partly in a newspaper enterprise, and he went to Paris with the purpose of studying art and adopting it as a profession. He soon took to journalism, and at the age of twenty-three had become a recognised contributor to *Fraser*. In 1836 he married, settled in London, and worked hard as a journeyman of letters, writing under several pseudonyms, including the now famous Michael Angelo Titmarsh and Mr. C. J. Yellowplush, and he gradually became known in the literary circles of the metropolis.

16. **Early Literary Career.**—In 1840 Thackeray published *The Paris Sketch-book*, a collection of clever articles originally contributed to *Fraser*. In this magazine and in the same year he concluded *Catherine*, a tale of sheer and brutal realism, marked by incisive wit and relentless irony, in which Thackeray's intention of satirising the Newgate type of story may be forgotten in the intensely painful but powerful and effective narrative itself. Next year he published in the same periodical *The Great Hoggarty Diamond*—dealing with the evils of rash speculation—an effort

which was hardly a success at the time. A tour in Ireland, during which he met Lever, resulted in the *The Irish Sketch-book* (1843), a delightful book, playful, racy, humorous, and eminently characteristic of his genius.

*The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon* (1844) appeared as a serial in *Fraser*. This was the most finished work Thackeray had yet attempted, and in some respects it is one of his best. It is the autobiography of a consummate scoundrel and unprincipled adventurer and gambler, told in so candid and natural a manner that a more or less sympathetic interest towards him is created in the mind of the reader. For studied irony, maintained in a high key from the first page to the last, the book may be justly compared with *Gulliver's Travels*; but it has none of Swift's fierce scorn and hate. Although Thackeray had already burlesqued the sentimental treatment of a criminal hero as exemplified by Ainsworth and Lytton, he adopts a character not far removed from that type himself; but he treats his hero after the manner of Fielding's Jonathan Wild. Thackeray's memoir is, however, more exhaustive, more consistent and convincing, than Fielding's mock-heroic treatment of the career of the great thief-catcher. Whatever satisfaction or sympathy the reader may feel with Lyndon in his successes, behind it there always lies the conviction that an avenging Nemesis sooner or later awaits this incarnation of cool, callous, and calculating selfishness. A trip to Egypt in 1844 resulted in another characteristic book of travel, *From Cornhill to Grand Cairo*.

17. **Vanity Fair.**—In 1847 commenced the monthly numbers of the novel that established Thackeray's fame on a lasting foundation, after he had served ten years' apprenticeship to the profession of letters. *Vanity Fair* ran for two years; it has all the seasoned satire of *The Snob* and *Yellowplush Papers*, and in addition that riper wisdom which experience of the world alone can produce. Thackeray calls it "a novel without a hero," and the only person in the book deserving the name is Major Dobbin; but he is made awkward, ugly, and ungainly, and it is not until the close of the book that his constancy and affection are suitably rewarded. The central figure of the book is Becky Sharp, who has been well

contrasted with Amelia Sedley as "the impersonation of intellect without virtue, and the other as that of virtue without intellect." Becky Sharp is a female Barry Lyndon, a clever adventuress, resourceful and inordinately selfish, who under any circumstances could live by her wits. Thackeray is remorseless in exposing the hollowness, the meanness, and the shams of which he saw so much in the world around him. But he gives an undue prominence to these in the Hogarthian canvas of characters who throng the booths of his "Vanity Fair." Hating vice so much, he analyses with microscopic minuteness the more selfish and baser instincts which govern human conduct. The whole Crawley family are thus subjected to the scalpel of his satire, his reflective irony and his wit; and few more unpleasant or more powerful moral dissections have ever been made than that of the Marquis of Steyne. The book, like others of Thackeray's novels, is without a plot, desultory, and more or less shapeless. Yet these defects, partly due to his departure from the recognised and conventional method of planning a novel, hardly obtrude themselves, so well maintained is the narrative, so vital the interest in the characters, and so riveted the attention in the flash-light display and intensity of his satire, from which nothing escapes. The description of the Waterloo days in Brussels contained in *Vanity Fair* is perhaps the best ever written.

18. *Pendennis*.—Thackeray's next work was *Pendennis*, on a plan similar to that of *Vanity Fair*, a rambling account of the career of a somewhat spoiled, but on the whole a good-hearted, young man from boyhood to his successful launch on a literary career. There is little of the hero about Arthur Pendennis; his life is commonplace as to incident, but depicted with the same faithful regard to detail as Fielding's Tom Jones. Thackeray complains that since that immortal work was written no writer had depicted "to his utmost type a MAN." He gives us therefore the average type of young man as he knew him, creating an eminently real and natural character, emphasising his faults and failings, and the errors of conduct into which they led him. Thackeray does not hide nor does he excuse these; like a skilled physician, he diagnoses the causes with merciless and convincing irony; the parental and other indiscretions that work mischievously in the

impressionable days of youth, the false standards of conduct in society—with all the hollowness and pretence to which hypocrisy and selfishness give birth, and the besetting blindness of men and women in pursuing the shadow for the substance, even to the grave.

Of the characters in *Pendennis*, Laura, like Amelia, is more or less colourless, but supremely good; and, in depicting Blanche Amory, Thackeray is at his best with one who had a sham mood and a sham sentiment ready for all occasions. George Warrington is one of Thackeray's finest creations, and in the irrepressible Mr. Harry Foker, the fast young man of the period is drawn to the life with great freshness and vigour. Major Pendennis is eminently characteristic of the worldly old bachelor in Clubland, to whom, however, much must be forgiven for his loyalty to the family name, and for his clever triumphs over Captain Costigan, and Mr. Morgan the valet. Thackeray's command of pathos is occasionally shown in *Pendennis*, the death of Pen's mother, for instance, being described with rare delicacy of tone and feeling, and there is no false note struck in touching on the sentimental lapses of Bows, the little fiddler.

19. **Esmond.**—Thackeray's next work, *Esmond*, in which the scene is laid in the reign of Anne, was published in 1852. It is his greatest work, and the greatest and most faithful reproduction of a past age in English fiction. Thackeray was steeped in the literature of the eighteenth century; its environment was as real to him as that of his own age, and his constant attention to restore the cast of thought and feeling in the language of the time helped to keep him from indulging in those asides of ironical reflection, so frequent in his previous novels. He was checked in this, too, by the autobiographical nature of the book, into which he does not needlessly intrude; and *Esmond*, one of the most admirable characters ever drawn, is no censor of his age, its morals or its manners. Among all the brilliant examples of the triumph of the imagination over time, *Esmond* has few equals; and of the numerous great instances of the successful quickening of a dead past into life by the spirit of fiction, it is excelled by none. Lady Castlewood and her daughter are well contrasted; the former is perhaps Thackeray's most perfectly finished female portrait, when we consider the com-



plexity of the forces which play upon her mind and heart ; while the latter—the embodiment of pride, ambition, and waywardness, a heartless beauty with most fascinating powers—required all the master's hand to trace. To *Esmond* Thackeray produced a sequel in *The Virginians*, which was commenced in monthly numbers in 1857, and dealt with the fortune of the grandsons of Colonel Esmond and Lady Castlewood. Like his former novels, it has the faults of want of plot, is rambling and discursive ; and, as is so often the case with a continuation, *The Virginians* suffers by contrast with the greatness of its predecessor. But the book is delightful, and its very desultory nature at times adds to its attractions ; it is full of varied life and movement, and as a picture of the manners of the time it loses little by comparison with the great masterpieces of the eighteenth century.

20. **The Newcomes.**—The remaining one of his four great novels, *The Newcomes*, began to appear in serial form in 1853 ; it has a kind of connection with *Pendennis*, as Arthur is the supposed chronicler of the Newcome family history. It has the usual want of plot, is very discursive, many characters are introduced, and the confidences and ironical reflections of the author are constant and unremitting. But the text of all his books—*Vanitas, vanitatum*—is here dwelt on, with, notwithstanding occasional lapses into his old severity, a softer, more tender tone and studied melancholy, than in his previous novels. Ethel Newcome stands beside Lady Castlewood as a model of womanhood ; Clive is another Arthur Pendennis, but handled more gently ; M. de Florac is perhaps the only great portrait of a Frenchman in English fiction ; and Colonel Newcome, the *preux chevalier*, one of the most perfect gentlemen in all fiction, is drawn with rare delicacy and skill ; but Thackeray stayed not his hand in bringing on him evil days. The final scene (where Colonel Newcome, sunk to a “poor brother” of the Charterhouse, answers *Adsum* for the last time on earth) is one of surpassing pathos, and is described with a reserve of power, a command of reticence, and a mastery over the springs of emotion that rank it with the greatest scenes of the kind in literature. That last sorrowful picture in *The Newcomes* and another great scene in *Esmond*—“the 29th December”—when Henry Esmond is reunited

to his dear mistress, Lady Castlewood, after a long estrangement, are passages which do honour even to the great novelist, and which few can read without emotion, and some not without tears.

In 1852 Thackeray went to America and gave a series of lectures on *The English Humorists* of the eighteenth century, which he had delivered the previous year at home. Though the lectures cannot be ranked among the best literary essays in English, nor his estimates accepted as always right, they yet contain much suggestive and acute criticism, and are eminently readable for their lively and vivacious style. He repeated his visit to America in 1855, and lectured on *The Four Georges*, and on his return home he delivered the lectures in England and Scotland. In 1860 *The Cornhill Magazine* was started and Thackeray appointed its first editor; in it appeared his novels, *Lovel the Widower* and *The Adventures of Philip*, and the *Roundabout Papers*—the latter (a series of occasional essays) being the ripest and most felicitous of his lighter work. *Denis Duval*, a novel showing no decay of power, was unfinished at his death.

21. **An Estimate.**—Thackeray's novels, as we have already pointed out, have great faults of construction, considered by the standard of a well-planned novel; they are wanting in plot, and are irregular, somewhat shapeless and inconsequent. He begins anywhere and lets the so-called plot shape itself. He returns to a forgotten point, picks up a dropped thread, and trusts to the haphazard of a mere accident for a connecting link. But too much importance must not be attached to these seeming defects. Some of these faults were inevitable from his method of writing the parts month by month; and the lines of such story as there is to tell in each of his novels are, on the whole, kept well in hand, towards a fitting end. Thackeray adopts the method of addressing an imaginary listener, in order the better to display his satire and moralising reflections. To this invisible auditor he addresses comments, remonstrances, and homilies, and they do not weary, so pointed and so stimulating are they, and so suited to the occasion that gives rise to them. The predominating characteristic of all his writing is satire; but it is satire united with true feeling and pathos. Thackeray's sense of the irony of life was especially strong; but he gave to it

the kindest expression. Dickens has been called "a lyric prose-writer, omnipotent in laughter and tears"; Thackeray was a melancholy humorist, a student of the failings and perversities of human nature. He has been charged with cynicism, but he was no cynic, either in his personal or in his literary life; he was kind, tender-hearted, generous, and true, a good friend and a good father; and the creator of the two immortal Colonels—Esmond and Newcome—was far removed from a mere sneering fault-finder. Thackeray's attitude of mind was largely of the intellectual type of the eighteenth century. The great religious, intellectual, and social movements of his own day affected him but little, and had little bearing on his work. He belonged more to the "understanding age" of the previous century than to his own, which vitally felt, and throbbed beneath, the pressure of the great problems of existence.

Thackeray's prose is simple in construction and written in the purest English; it is clear and rhythmical, but sometimes a little loose, through hasty composition. It has on the whole a careless ease, an artistic grace, a refinement of tone, and a note of distinction which place Thackeray among the great masters of English prose.

(i) "Beatrix proves the misery of her own career so fully that no one will follow it. The example is so awful that it will surely deter. . . . You may go through all his characters with the same effect. Pendennis will be scorned because he is light; Warrington loved because he is strong and merciful; Dobbin will be honoured because he is unselfish; and the old Colonel, though he be foolish, vain, and weak, almost worshipped because he is so true a gentleman. . . . With Thackeray, the physic is always curative and never poisonous. He may be admitted safely into that close fellowship, and be allowed to accompany the dear ones to their retreats. The girl will never become bold under his preaching, nor will the lad receive a false idea of what becomes a youth, when he is first about to take his place among men."—ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

(ii) "His prose is simply admirable. Without effort, without undue emphasis or straining, and by the use of means seemingly simple, and language almost colloquial, it reaches the very highest beauty. . . . It follows unerringly the writer's thought, sprightly when he is gay, serious in his moods of sadness, persuasive when he wishes to convince. It is clear as crystal always, and yet sparkles with felicity of diction, that seems to bubble up spontaneous and unsought. . . . It has a beautiful music of its own, a music akin to that of the masters of the sister-art, inasmuch as its cadences seem unforeseen, yet always satisfy the ear."—FRANK T. MARZIALS, *Great Writers Series*.

22. **Charles Reade** (1814—1884), whose place in the order of the later Victorian novelists is still a matter of discussion among critics, was the son of a country squire. He was educated at the University of Oxford, where he was elected to a fellowship at Magdalen College, and called to the Bar in 1843, but never practised. Reade studied the art of fiction for many years before he published a novel. He took himself seriously as a dramatist, though he attained little success in his plays; but his work in the drama gave a distinct tone and colour to all his prose writings. In 1856 he published *It's Never too Late to Mend*, written for the purpose of exposing prison abuses. It also gives a vivid description of life in Australia in the first days of the rush to the gold-diggings. This was followed by others in a like vein: *Hard Cash* (1863) was directed against the evils of private lunatic asylums; *Foul Play* (1869) was levelled at the owners and traders in rotten ships, and so paved the way for necessary legislation against a scandalous traffic in human lives; and *Put Yourself in His Place* (1870) dealt with the outrages arising from trades-unions. *Griffith Gaunt* appeared in 1866, and was considered by Reade himself the best of his novels; but few would accept this judgment.

Reade followed a carefully arranged system in the preparation of his works. He took immense pains in the accumulation and tabulation of masses of detail on his selected subject. He shows a wonderful grasp in their manipulation; but he uses them too abundantly, and was carried in consequence into an excess of realism which is often repellent. Reade had great imagination, and was most fertile in resources; but he was fettered by his ponderous masses of material. He is dramatic, rapid in scenic movement, and abundant in incident; but he is often theatrical and intricate, and he frequently causes an apparent loss of connection or continuity of plot by abrupt changes of scene. His faults of style are also great—such as his too frequent use of short, sharp sentences, his conceits and oddities of thought and expression, and his lapses of sequence in dialogue. But of the intensity, power, vigour, and strength of his writings and his high qualities as a satirist and reformer of abuses, there can be no question.

But Reade has a greater title to fame than can be claimed



for him through these novels. His *Cloister and the Hearth* (1861) has been judged by some competent critics, such as Sir Walter Besant and Mr. Swinburne, to rank "among the very greatest masterpieces of narrative" in English. Whether the verdict be accepted or not, there is a consensus of opinion to recognise its claims to be placed high in the rank of English fiction. A more vivid, thrilling, humane, lifelike story has hardly been penned by any writer. Thanks to an abundant use of that unmatched store of materials for picturing fifteenth-century life on the Continent, which is to be found in the *Colloquies* of the great humorist Erasmus, Reade has been able to restore the very atmosphere of the Middle Ages. The varied and abundant life of the time, the motley crowds, the society from beggar to prince in country and town, the cruelty and corruption, and the discomforts and dangers of wayfaring life are reproduced with a faithfulness and glow of colour, and a magical skill of movement which fascinate and entrance the reader. Reade is at his best here, too, in his mastery over pathos and emotion, and exercises his powers with a rare delicacy of touch and sweetness of tone. The book shows some of the faults already referred to; but the story, on the whole, is well-knit, and his dialogue at times perfect, the final scene between Gerard<sup>1</sup> and Margaret in his hermit's cell being a fine example of dialectic skill. No one can read unmoved Gerard's letter—"The biggest mankind has seen as yet, the beautifullest and most moving, and smallest writ"; and whatever may be said of the book as a whole, few will deny the truth of his brother Giles the hunchback's comment, for the letter is a finished masterpiece, and the family reading of it a domestic picture as perfect as a panel by Jan Steen.<sup>2</sup>

23. **Anthony Trollope** (1815—1882), one of the most popular novelists of the Victorian epoch, was the son of Mrs. Frances Trollope, who was a well-known novelist in her day (see p. 514). Her son was educated at Winchester and Harrow, and became a public servant in the Post Office. Appointed to a surveyorship, his

<sup>1</sup> The hero Gerard was a real person and the father of Erasmus. The latter (1467—1536) was born at Rotterdam, and became one of the greatest scholars of his age; he was also one of the leading spirits of the Renaissance or New Learning.

<sup>2</sup> A famous Dutch painter (1626—1679), noted for his detail of workmanship.

duties carried him to Ireland, and afterwards through England and Wales, and being devoted to open-air amusements, especially hunting, he acquired a knowledge of men and things which served him to good purpose in his novels. After several failures, he achieved a success with *The Warden* (1855), and its continuation, *Barchester Towers*, both of them descriptive of clerical life. These are of the series generally known as the Barsetshire novels, which he produced in succession down to his retirement from service in 1867, among them being *Dr. Thorne* (1858), *Framley Parsonage* (1861), *Orley Farm* (1862), and *The Last Chronicles of Barset* (1867). A two-years' experience in travelling through the south-west of England on official business supplied the material for his novels dealing with life in a cathedral town, in which Trollope achieved a distinct success. Mr. Crawley is one of his best creations, while Mrs. Proudie, the domineering wife of the bishop, has become more or less proverbial. In his leisure after his retirement from the Post Office in 1867, Trollope wrote abundantly, and his pen ceased not until his death in 1882. He produced about fifty volumes, and most of these, as he has told us, were written against time in a thoroughly mechanical way. Such a method gave little leisure for thought, so that his works suffer from want of it, and from lack of style and construction. He is a sober, honest, homely writer, eminently English and eminently healthy. His own criticism of one of his books aptly describes the whole: "The story was thoroughly English. There was a little fox-hunting and a little tuft-hunting, some Christian virtue and some Christian cant. There was no heroism and no villainy. There was much Church, but more love-making; and it was downright honest love." "It may interest some," he further tells us in his *Autobiography*, "if I state that I have made by literature something near £70,000. . . . I look upon the result as comfortable, but not splendid."

24. **Charles Kingsley** (1819—1875), whose name is almost a synonym for that of a typical manly Englishman, and who early achieved distinction as a novelist, was a distinguished graduate of Cambridge. He took orders, and became curate of Eversley, in Hampshire, of which parish he was afterwards rector, and where he

spent the remainder of his life. Kingsley was a most versatile writer, and his first work, *The Saint's Tragedy*, founded on the story of St. Elizabeth<sup>1</sup> of Hungary, a dramatic poem, was published in 1848. This was followed in the next year by two remarkable novels, *Alton Locke* and *Yeast*, in which Kingsley's views as a Christian Socialist are clearly enunciated. The former describes the life of a "tailor and poet" labouring in a London workshop, and in the latter the condition of the agricultural labourer is vividly portrayed. The effect of these two novels was great, and for the next few years Kingsley carried on his crusade in a series of articles on social subjects under the name of "Parson Lot." In 1853 he published *Hypatia*, in which we have a brilliant picture of life in Alexandria, and of the struggle between Christianity and paganism and neo-platonism, at the beginning of the fifth century. Two years later *Westward Ho!* appeared—one of the best historical novels in the language. The book glows with life, colour, and action, dealing as it does with the great struggle for the supremacy of the sea in the stirring days of Elizabeth, and giving striking pictures of early colonisation and exploration in the New World. *Two Years Ago* (1857) is a spirited book, with vivid descriptions of the scenery of North Devon. *Hereward the Wake* (1866), the last of his works of fiction, and a tale of the Norman Conquest days, has not, perhaps, all the power, interest, or vitality of *Westward Ho!*; but it is a book which no Englishman can read without feeling a glow of patriotic pride.

In 1860 Kingsley was appointed Professor of History in the University of Cambridge, and the result of his work is best seen in *The Roman and the Teuton* (1864) and *The Ancien Régime* (1867), the latter a series of lectures delivered in London. He was unfitted by temperament and training for historical research; and attractive and picturesque as his style and method of treatment are, his work did not stand the test of criticism. In 1863 appeared *The Water Babies*, a delightful book of real originality and genius, and a permanent contribution to the literature of

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth (1207—1231), daughter of Andrew II., King of Hungary, and wife of Louis, Landgrave of Thuringia, was celebrated for her sanctity and devotion to the poor.

childhood. Always a student of nature, he wrote in 1855 *Glaucus, or the Wonders of the Seashore*, and after many years returned to the subject, and in 1872 published *Town Geology*. A voyage to the West Indies resulted in *At Last*,<sup>1</sup> an excellent book of travel. These are his chief prose works, besides his *Sermons*, which fill some dozen volumes; but his style has not the finish, the grace, the ease, and rhythmical movement which would entitle him to rank among the masters of English prose. Kingsley was also a poet, and his lyrics *The Three Fishers* and *The Sands of Dee* are among the best-known in the language. His character and temperament are, however, best seen in *The Last Buccaneer*, *The Outlaw*, and *Ode to the North-east Wind*.

Kingsley's whole life was one of strenuous endeavour to better and ennoble mankind. Ardent and impetuous, with a keen feeling for human suffering among the toiling masses in town and country, he flung himself into the Socialistic movement under the influence of the Rev. Frederick Denison Maurice,<sup>2</sup> and with voice and pen preached the gospel of duty from the practical Christian standpoint. His influence was immense; his enthusiasm was tempered by keen common sense; and while he attacked the abuse of wealth which recognised no duties, he was equally the strong advocate for self-help, and unsparing in his censure of bad domestic habits among the working classes. Few men have lived more whole-heartedly, more manfully, than Kingsley. His Christianity was termed "muscular," and the epithet was deserved for his teaching and example of the healthy enjoyment of open-air life and harmless recreation. His views on social subjects and his Broad Church opinions subjected him to much criticism, and he was an ardent polemic, as we have seen from his controversy with Newman. Kingsley was typical of his race and age, and both were the better for the example of the man and his work.

25. **William Wilkie Collins** (1824—1889), the son of an artist,

<sup>1</sup> Kingsley had always a longing to see the tropics, and his wish was gratified "at last" in 1871.

<sup>2</sup> The chief promoter of the Christian Socialist movement, founder of the Working Man's College, London, author of many theological and other works, and a man of great influence on the thought of his day.



was the most noted writer of sensational novels of his day. He was the friend, and has been called a disciple, of Dickens ; but a lack of humour and the absence of special purpose in Collins's novels, as well as a wholly dissimilar method of treatment, differentiate his work very clearly from that of the greater novelist. Wilkie Collins wrote some five and twenty novels and collections of stories, of which the best known are *The Woman in White* (1860), which appeared in *All the Year Round*, and *The Moonstone* (1868). The former is a thrilling story, with an intricate plot, cleverly developed by the unusual means of successive narration (a device also of Charles Reade's) by the principal personages concerned. Though Collins is deficient in the power of characterisation, Count Fosco is a genuine contribution to the gallery of portraits in English fiction. *The Moonstone* is a powerful tale which anticipates the present-day detective novel ; and here again the author displays his originality in the creation of startling situations and thrilling episodes, leading to the final elucidation of the mystery of the fatal stone. *No Name*, dealing with an unpleasant imputation as to birth, ranks but little below these excellent examples of Wilkie Collins's peculiar vein.

"Wilkie Collins seems so to construct his novels that he not only, before writing, plans everything on, down to the minutest detail, from the beginning to the end ; but then plots it all back again, to see that there is no piece of necessary dovetailing which does not dovetail with absolute accuracy. The construction is most minute and most wonderful. But I can never lose the taste of the construction."—TROLLOPE'S *Autobiography*.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

---

### B TENNYSON AND HIS AGE.

1. **Introductory.**—The outburst of poetry which marked the first years of the nineteenth century was vigorously maintained during the Victorian era, and Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, and Keats found no unworthy successors in Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, and Rossetti; while so great has been the number of minor singers that Mr. James Clarence Stedman, in his *Victorian Poets*, published in 1875, after dealing at length with eleven principal poets, finds considerably more than one hundred names worthy of inclusion in what he terms the "general choir," to which in 1887 he already deems it necessary to add forty later writers; so that it may indeed be said we cannot see the wood for the trees. It is true that many critics have seen in this abundant crop of creditable verse the signs of a literary, or at least poetic, decadence, similar to that which marked the third century before Christ—the era of Bion, Theocritus, and others of the Idyllic school of Greek poetry. The period, however, which has produced such work as that of Tennyson and Browning, and which still counts amongst its living writers a poet of the rank of Mr. Swinburne, has just claims to assert its possession of a poetic vigour as yet unabated. The first of the verse writers of this period deserving mention, who was born in the closing year of the eighteenth century, and was thus ten years senior to Tennyson, is best known as the poetic exponent of that sympathy with the poor and suffering which characterised the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

2. **Thomas Hood** (1799—1845), was born in London of Scottish

parentage. His father, who was a bookseller, died when his son was twelve years old, and the lad's school-days then ended. Hood served an apprenticeship as an engraver, and at an early age commenced contributing to magazines and newspapers. When he was twenty-two years old he became sub-editor of *The London Magazine*, and was one of the interesting literary circle that included De Quincey, Lamb, and Hazlitt. In 1825 he published, jointly with his brother-in-law Reynolds (the friend of Keats), a volume of verse entitled *Odes and Addresses to Great People*. In 1824 he married without any certain means of support, except that from his pen; this was precarious, owing to his delicate health, but nevertheless his marriage was a very happy one. In 1826 the first series of *Whims and Oddities* appeared; in these he opened up a rich vein of humour, and he worked it for twenty years. The book was a great success, and Hood became at once a writer of great popularity. Unfortunately he was involved in the failure of a bankrupt firm, and, like Scott, undertook to clear himself by his pen; he retired to the Continent, where he remained for five years, during which time he endured much bodily suffering. In these years he produced his *Comic Annuals*, and also wrote *Up the Rhine*, a descriptive prose work written in letter form. In the last year of his life he was granted a pension which reverted to his family, and he died of consumption in May 1845.

Hood was a most prolific author; but, forced as he was to write for his daily bread, much of his work was ephemeral. He had a keen and delicate wit, which constantly ran into punning, and he was one of those rare instances in which the habit did not vitiate his best work. He wrote many charming songs and lyrics, and he also exercised his genius in trying to better the lot of the suffering poor by such poems as *The Song of the Shirt* and *The Bridge of Sighs*. These have long enjoyed a great popularity, but to the sensitive ear of many, the pathos and sentiment are rather overdrawn. In some of his other poems, such as *The Deathbed*, this fault is more apparent; yet the quality of the inspiration in the former poems is in a high degree humane, and the appeal direct and instantaneous. *The Dream of Eugene Aram*, one of his finest poems, was written in 1829; this and *The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies*, and *Miss*

*Kilmansegg*, are striking instances of the versatility of Hood's genius. "The predominant characteristics of Hood's genius," it has well been said, "are humorous fancies grafted upon melancholy impressions." His keen sense of the odd, grotesque, and fantastic became an intellectual exercise; and its sudden introduction with such a mastery of poetic art can hardly be paralleled, in like perfection, in the work of any other English poet.

"When he laid down his pens and pranks, put the motley off, and spoke out of his heart, all England and America listened with tears and wonder."—  
THACKERAY (*Roundabout Papers*).

3. **Alfred Tennyson** (1809—1892), was born at Somersby, a village in Lincolnshire, where his father was rector. Alfred was the third son; and his two elder brothers were also poets, and poets of no inconsiderable gifts. Alfred was sent to the Grammar School at Louth, and from thence to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he made many youthful friendships, and gained the Chancellor's Prize for an English poem, the subject of which was *Timbuctoo*. In the year 1827 appeared a volume of *Poems by Two Brothers*; though, in fact, all three had contributed to it. In the year 1830 was published *Poems, chiefly Lyrical*; and this volume was his first appeal on his own behalf to the reading public. Tennyson's earlier poems were not praised by the critics; some of them, indeed, were very roughly handled; and when in 1832 a second volume appeared, in spite of manifest improvement, the critics showed little abatement in their hostility. This was not encouraging. "The Reviews stopped me," he said; but he manfully set to work to read, to study the art of poetry, and to correct his youthful errors. For more than ten years he worked in silence; and then there appeared in 1842 *Poems by Alfred Tennyson*, in two volumes. This issue established his reputation; his fame was now fixed, and rested on a solid foundation. In the year 1850, on the death of Wordsworth, Tennyson was created Poet Laureate; and from this time till his death the record of his life is little more than the record of the different volumes he issued to the public. In the year 1884 he was raised to the peerage under the title of Baron Tennyson of D'Eyncourt, the first instance of an English peerage being granted



on the score of literary work alone.<sup>1</sup> He died at Aldworth, Haslemere, in the year 1892, received a public funeral, and was buried in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey, not far from the resting-place of Chaucer.

Tennyson wrote and published poetry for about sixty-seven years; and for fifty of these years he was regarded—and justly regarded—as the greatest and most typical poet of the nineteenth century. Nothing ever tempted him to haste in writing; he gave up all his time and thoughts to poetry and to the polishing of his verse; and he rarely went into general society—which, in fact, only wearied him. He was never tired of altering and correcting his previously published poems; and the changes he made in many are very striking. No form of poetic thought or expression came amiss to him. He gives us the most lively pictures of English life and scenery; he presents us with dramatic portraits, and many noble allegorical or semi-allegorical figures; he is author of the most stirring ballads (ballads of action and ballads of romance) in the boldest and most inspiring metres, as well as of the noblest and most pathetic elegies. He has produced pure lyrics, lyrical narratives, odes on public events, classical studies, and a long series of short epics; and in his later days he added to this noble stream of poetry by a number of dramas. And in all his work Tennyson has shown a mastery of versification and of rhythm, which has not been surpassed by any other English poet.

4. **Tennyson's Early Period.**—The collection of poems published in 1830, and all written before the poet was one-and-twenty, contains something entirely new in English poetry—a new rhythm, a bolder and more pictorial style than had ever been seen before. These two qualities of music and of painting are very apparent in the poem of *Mariana* :—

Her tears fell with the dews at even;  
 Her tears fell ere the dews were dried;  
 She could not look on the sweet heaven,  
 Either at morn or eventide.

The same exquisite harmonies are to be perceived in the *Recollec-*

<sup>1</sup> Lord Macaulay received his peerage as much for his political services—in India and at home—as for his historical and poetical work.

tions of the *Arabian Nights*, accompanied by vignettes full of colour and picturesqueness. And, even at a date so early, Tennyson's skill and cunning in placing and in varying the pause are manifest in *The Dying Swan* :—

The wild swan's death-hymn took the soul  
Of that waste place with joy  
Hidden in sorrow : at first to the ear  
The warble was low, and full, and clear ;  
And floating about the under-sky,  
Prevailing in weakness, the coronach stole  
Sometimes afar, and sometimes anear.

Here the pause (or caesura) is as cunningly varied as anywhere in Milton.

The poems produced and published in 1832 mark a distinct advance in the poet's power of expression and feeling. The crown of this period is *The Lotos-Eaters*. In few English poems written before this can we find so deep an emotion expressed by music so subtle and so entrancing :—

But evermore

Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,  
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.  
Then some one said, "We will return no more";  
And all at once they sang, "Our island home  
Is far beyond the wave ; we will no longer roam."

The skilfulness of the pause, and the employment of alliteration and assonance, should be noticed in the above lines. The poem of *Oenone* is one of Tennyson's classical studies, marked by the same clear music.

The new set of poems, published in 1842, opens with the magnificent short epic of the *Morte d'Arthur*, which formed the prelude to his *Idylls of the King*, a work which was not completed till 1889, that is till nearly fifty years after. The firm grasp of the subject, the mingling of ordinary events with mystery, the scenic effects, the melody of such lines as,—

To the island-valley of Avilion ;  
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,  
Nor ever wind blows loudly,—

combine with the noble close to give us the feeling of spiritual greatness shown in the poem.

To the same time belong *Locksley Hall* and *Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere*, the latter one of those poems which show how early Tennyson's mind began to turn to the large and rich possibilities of the King Arthur cycle.

5. **His Longer Poems.**—Tennyson's most important long poems (before the appearance of the idylls and the dramas) are *The Princess* (1847), the *In Memoriam* (1850), and *Maud* (1855). *The Princess* is a "medley"—earnest wed to sport—on the social position of woman in the world.

The dramatic power in the poem is considerable, and it contains passages of the most exquisite blank verse. But the finest element in it is the intercalation of the short lyrics between each part. These are intended as "reliefs" from the too great seriousness of the different parts. The college is founded, the women-professors are appointed, the students are assembled; but quickly the thought of the reader is drawn off to a quite human misunderstanding between man and wife in the lyric, "As through the land at eve we went"—a difference made up over the grave of their dead child. In the next part appears the difficult problem of enforcing law in the new community; and that is followed by another poem about a child—the cradle song, "Sweet and low, sweet and low." Next comes the geological excursion; and the probable intrusion of love is heralded by the magnificent lyric, the bugle song, "The splendour falls on castle walls." The fourth part contains the discovery and the expulsion of the male intruders; that is preluded by the exquisite song in unrimed verse, "Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean," and closed by the fiery chant, "Thy voice is heard thro' rolling drums," in which the thought of wife and children fills the soldier with new and sterner courage. The appearance of the army of the king, come in search of his son, is accompanied by the famous song, "Home they brought her warrior dead"—a song which shows the all-potency of the child over human emotions and "opens the sluices of the widow's tears." The sixth part has at its close the glorious lyric, "Ask me no more: the moon may draw the sea." And the whole poem closes with the dawning of the light upon "the new world that is the old."

The *In Memoriam* is a long poem on the death of Arthur Henry Hallam<sup>1</sup> (the son of the historian), one of the noblest tributes ever paid to friendship, and one which takes its place among the greatest elegies in all literature. While expressing his personal sorrow, Tennyson is perpetually drawn off to discuss some of the deepest problems that can occupy the mind or stir the heart of thinking men. The metre is a remarkable one, an iambic quatrain, with the two

<sup>1</sup> Born 1811; died in Vienna 1833.

interior lines riming with each other, and the two exterior lines also riming together. This would seem likely to produce monotony, but not so here; on the contrary, the verse shows an infinite variety of phrase and rhythm. *Maud* belongs to the period when the minds of men were filled with the Crimean War (1854—1856), and records the healing of a morbid mind—in one who had undergone a terrible tragedy and sustained a life-long loss—by the serious views of life and its responsibility that war by its nature gives. In this poem Tennyson rises to his highest level of lyrical power.

6. **The Idylls.**—These poems may be said to represent the third period of Tennyson's poetic growth. Of them the first four—*Enid*, *Vivien*, *Elaine*, and *Guinevere*—contain a blank verse, the finest, the most polished, and the most varied ever written since the death of Milton. These four idylls<sup>1</sup> were gradually added to, till at length, in 1889, the whole of the cycle was completed in twelve books. As the *Iliad* is the tale of Troy (Ilion), so these idylls are the tales of Arthur, the Arthuriad of English literature. The wonderful charms of poetry and measure are everywhere present; the style almost everywhere perfect. Along with these may be bracketed the strange tale of *Enoch Arden*,<sup>2</sup> which appeared in 1864. It is in this poem perhaps that Tennyson's power of depicting landscape is shown in its highest force. The passage describing tropical scenery is well known:—

The mountain wooded to the peak, the lawns  
And winding glades high up like ways to Heaven,  
The slender coco's drooping crown of plumes,  
The lightning flash of insect and of bird.

No sail from day to day, but every day  
The sunrise broken into scarlet shafts  
Among the palms and ferns and precipices;  
The blaze upon the waters to the east;  
The blaze upon his island overhead;  
The blaze upon the waters to the west;  
Then the great stars that globed themselves in Heaven.

<sup>1</sup> The word "idyll" is a Greek word meaning "little picture." It is generally applied to pastoral poems like Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* or Burns' *Cottar's Saturday Night*.

<sup>2</sup> The story of *Enoch Arden* was told to Tennyson by his friend Edward Fitzgerald, the translator of the Persian poet Omar Khayyam.



7. **The Ballads and Dramas.**—The ballads (the best of which are *The Revenge* and *The Defence of Lucknow*) may be said, with the dramas, to mark the final period of Tennyson's poetic labours. Tennyson was over seventy-one years of age when he wrote *The Revenge*; and yet the power of eloquent description, of dramatic presentation, and poetic expression, is as great as—if not greater than—when he wrote *Maud* in the fifties. The sweep of such lines as—

And the night went down, and the sun smiled out far over the summer sea,—  
alternated with the short forms,—

And a day less or more  
At sea or ashore,  
We die—does it matter when?

shows a power of passion, and a power of restraining and guiding that passion, as rare as it is admirable. *The Defence of Lucknow* expresses, in the most adequate and intense form, the spirit that animates the race when they are fighting for their sovereign and their country:—

Handful of men as we were, we were English in heart and in limb,  
Strong with the strength of the race to command, to obey, to endure,  
Each of us fought as if hope for the garrison hung but on him.

Tennyson does not show at his best in his dramas. He was sixty-six when he wrote his first play, *Queen Mary*, a time somewhat late to begin to study the art of dramatic writing. Nor was Tennyson well acquainted with the technique of the stage, necessary for successful dramatic representation. In *Queen Mary* the keynote of the play is Mary's fear that she should lose the love of Philip. But this fear is, and remains, a private feeling, and does not give rise to action of a dramatic kind. Probably *Becket* is the best of the plays, and it still holds the stage.

8. **His English and Versification.**—Tennyson's English is the best and purest English of the nineteenth century, and no country has ever produced a more consummate artist in words. He employs with equal happiness and artistic skill the two elements of the language—the Saxon and the classical, and he manages both with the most successful results. In *The Lord*

of *Burleigh* he gives us the simplest thought in the simplest Saxon form:—

And he came to look upon her  
 And he look'd at her and said,  
 "Bring the dress and put it on her,  
 That she wore when she was wed."

In this verse every word is perfectly pure English. But in the following extract from the poem *To the Rev. F. D. Maurice* the italicised words, though quite simple in meaning, are all classical:—

How best to help the slender *store*,  
 How *mend* the dwellings, of the *poor*;  
 How gain in life, as life *advances*,  
*Valour* and *charity* more and more.

This mixture of Latin and English derivatives, which Shakespeare manages with so admirable an effect, is used by Tennyson with similar success. Thus again, in his poem *Will*, he gives us the lines:—

But ill for him who, bettering not with time,  
 Corrupts the strength of heaven-descended Will,  
 And ever weaker grows thro' acted crime,  
 Or seeming-genial venial fault,  
 Recurring and suggesting still!

There are, in these five lines, nine words of Latin origin.

Tennyson has written in almost every kind of metre; but the kind he has used most is the ordinary one of English poets—the iambic. When the passion of the poem is strong, and the thought moves with eagerness and rapidity, he employs the trochee or the dactyl—two kinds of the same nature, that is, each starting with the strongly accented syllable. In the fine poem of *Boadicea*, it is (with a few occasional exceptions) the trochee which he employs throughout:—

Fear not isle of blowing woodland isle of silvery parapets;

(trochaic heptameter: the last two are dactyls). In the *Charge of the Light Brigade* he employs dactyls:—

Cannon to right of them  
 Cannon to left of them.

In some instances he employs a mixed metre, which is controlled

entirely by the inner feeling, and not by external laws, as in the first part of *The Window*:—

Clouds that are racing above,  
And winds and lights and shadows that cannot be still,  
All running on one way to the home of my love,  
You are all running on, and I stand on the slope of the hill,  
And the winds are up in the morning!

“His versification is by far the most perfect of any English poet, and results in a harmony positively incomparable. So also his colour and outline in conveying the visual image are based on a study of natural fact and a practice in transforming it to words which are equally beyond comparison. Take any one of a myriad lines of Tennyson, and the mere arrangement of vowels and consonants will be a delight to the ear; let any one of a thousand of his descriptions body itself before the eye, and the picture will be like the things seen in a dream, but firmer and clearer.”—SAINTSBURY.

9. **Summary.**—Tennyson combined an unsurpassed, and even unequalled, mastery over words and over rhythms with a keen insight and clear vision into human nature. His style showed a union of pictorial power with musical expression that is to be found in no other English poet. He brought, in fact, a new music and a new rhythm into the poetry of England. The character of his poetical power, and the variety of his work, are as remarkable as is the volume of that work, and the length of time during which that power was exercised. For over sixty years he wrote, and during these sixty years he showed no sign of falling-off or decay. His verse has been accused of prettiness—of too high a polish; but a more correct term for this quality is exquisiteness—“exquisiteness in form, in fancy, in painting, and in music.” Tennyson was a popular poet as well as a great poet; and he was the cheering influence, as well as the teacher, of his race for the greater part of the nineteenth century. He appealed to the deeper spirit and more thoughtful minds of his countrymen by a certain “dream-faculty” that he possessed—a faculty seen in pieces like *The Vision of Sin*, *The Two Voices*, and in many other poems. He has been called “the Virgil of England,” and there is much truth in the comparison. He has all the music and artistic power of the Roman poet, and he too is a—

Landscape-lover, lord of language . . .  
All the chosen coin of fancy  
flashing out from many a golden phrase.

Like Virgil, again, Tennyson may well be placed among the wielders—

of the stateliest measure  
ever moulded by the lips of man.

With the single exception of Shakespeare there is no writer who has given to the language so many lines of every-day quotation, and so many passages that are quotable on so large a number of subjects. *In Memoriam* alone has added hundreds to the common stock which serve to light up the common thought. Such as "Her eyes are homes of silent prayer," and "Faintly trust the larger hope," while such lines as "Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers," "Raw Haste, half-sister to Delay," "Kind hearts are more than coronets," have become every-day proverbs.

(i) "The influences of Pope and Dryden were weak in force and merely external in effect. the influence of Byron was short-lived, that of Wordsworth was partial and limited, in comparison with the influence of Tennyson."—  
SAINTSHURY.

(ii) "All his technique was not for its own sake, but was first urged by his love of beauty. It was necessary, for the sake of his faithfulness to her, that the shape he gave to what he loved should be as perfect, as strong, as gracious, and as full of delightful surprises as he could make it; and not one of our poets has striven with a more unfailing intensity to do this honour to all the beauty he saw in Nature and in man; as eager to do this at eighty as at thirty years. It is a great lesson to all artists; it is a lesson to us all."—  
STOPFORD BROOKE.

(iii) "Union with infinite love by loving; that is the aim of man—an illimitable aim. . . . This is the Christian position, and it is the position Tennyson preserves through his poetry. There is no one, it is true, from whose works better lessons can be drawn for the conduct of life, for morals in their higher ranges, than can be drawn from Tennyson. But below all conduct, as its foundation impulse, lies in this poet's work the love of the infinite Love, the passion of unending effort for it, and the conviction of an eternity of life in which to pursue after it."—*Idem*.

(iv) "As the poetic artist of the nineteenth century who best knew his own limitations, and in whom the balance, the compromise between form and matter in which poetry consists, is best preserved, as poetic chronicler of the mental life of his time, and as the interpreter of that spirit of intellectual hesitation which was characteristic of his contemporaries and leads to eclecticism in matters of faith, Tennyson will be remembered."—PROFESSOR  
MACNEILE DIXON.

**10. Robert Browning** (1812—1889). The second of the great poets who adorned the reign of Queen Victoria was born in Camberwell on May 7th, 1812. He came of a good middle-class



English Liberal stock—his father and grandfather were clerks in the Bank of England—and obtained a desultory education, mainly from his father, which stored his mind with an immense amount of heterogeneous information. He was much influenced in his boyhood by the poetry of Shelley and Byron, which inspired many youthful poems, that were not, however, allowed by their author to see the light. As early as 1833 Robert Browning published his first considerable poem, *Pauline*, which appeared anonymously. This introduced him to many literary acquaintances, amongst others to Alfred Domett,<sup>1</sup> the "Waring" of one of his shorter poems, and to a French Royalist Count, who suggested as a subject for a play "Paracelsus."<sup>2</sup> The hint was taken, and in 1835 appeared the poem of that name, the author's first characteristic work. Though "caviare to the general," *Paracelsus* had many admirers of various schools of thought, among them being Landor, Leigh Hunt, John Forster,<sup>3</sup> and John Stuart Mill. Another suggestion for a play came from the well-known actor Macready,<sup>4</sup> and the result was *Strafford*. This was produced on the stage in 1837, and met with but trifling success. In 1840 appeared the most puzzling of Browning's works, *Sordello*, which had been commenced before he turned aside to the writing of *Strafford*. On this poem, Tennyson's well-known saying perhaps best gives the verdict of the ordinary reader, namely "that the first line of the poem,—

Who will, may hear Sordello's story told,—

And the last line,—

Who would, has heard Sordello's story told,—

were the only two lines in the poem that he understood, and they were lies."

<sup>1</sup> A poet of considerable repute and a New Zealand statesman. The dates of his birth and death (1811—1887) are nearly identical with Browning's.

<sup>2</sup> A German-Swiss physician and alchemist (1493—1541), one of the founders of pharmaceutical chemistry. His real name was Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim.

<sup>3</sup> An historian and biographer (1812—1876); wrote the lives of Goldsmith, Landor, and Dickens.

<sup>4</sup> William Charles Macready (1793—1873) was noted for his rendering of Shakespearean characters.

11. **Italy and Marriage.**—In 1838 Browning visited Italy, the country which was thenceforth to exert so abiding an influence on him, and his next poems possess a strong Italian flavour. These were published under the fantastic title of *Bells and Pomegranates*, of which eight numbers appeared between 1841 and 1846. They included the beautiful poem *Pippa Passes*, with its dominant note of

God's in His Heaven—  
All's right with the world—

and three dramas, one of which—*A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*—has been acted with some success. Up to this time all his poems had been published at his father's expense, and had realised no profits for their author.

In 1844 occurred his introduction to Miss Elizabeth Barrett, the invalid cousin of his friend, Mr. Kenyon, and from their first meeting the most passionate mutual attachment sprang up. As the lady knew her father would never sanction her entering on wedlock, she took, in 1846, the hazardous step of a private marriage, followed by an elopement to Italy, where they resided for five years. In 1851 Browning and his wife visited London again, but soon returned to the continent, spending some time in Paris, whence they once more passed to Italy, settling in the Guidi Palace in Florence, known to readers of Mrs. Browning's poems as "Casa Guidi"; and here it was that she died, in 1861.

12. **His Greatest Work.**—While in Italy Browning produced successively *Christmas Eve* and *Easter Day* (1850), *Men and Women* (1855), and *Dramatis Personae* (1862), but shortly after his wife's death he returned to London, and, with occasional excursions to the continent, occupied himself with his greatest work, already begun in Italy, *The Ring and the Book*, which was completed and published in 1868. Previous to its publication had appeared the six-volume edition of his collected works, which marks his acceptance by the public as a standard author; but *The Ring and the Book* finally established his reputation as one of the greatest poets of the Victorian era,

In 1871 he wrote that charming transcript of the *Alcestis* of Euripides<sup>1</sup> contained in *Balaustion's Adventure*, closely followed by *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*, a poet's estimate of the career and character of Napoleon III., and in the following spring he published the somewhat unpleasant-toned *Fifine at the Fair*. Browning now led a busy intellectual and social existence, continuing for some years to pour forth an abundant wealth of poetry of the most varied character: from *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country* (1873), a tragedy of "sea-coast-nook-full Normandy," to *Ferishtah's Fancies* (1884). He was now, 1884, seventy-two years of age, yet full of what might be termed youthful force and vigour; but only two more works of any note were to appear from his pen, the second being the *Asolando* volume published in London on the day that he died in Venice, December 12th, 1889. His body was taken to England and buried in the Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, the choir singing his wife's poem, "He giveth His beloved sleep."

13. **His Work.**—The work of Robert Browning exceeds in quantity that of any English poet except Shakespeare, *The Ring and the Book* alone containing over twenty-one thousand lines, or nearly six times as many as *Hamlet*. And so varied is his work, alike in character and merit, that it is natural to expect the most diverse judgments as to his position amongst English poets. Whilst some critics of authority would, in their admiration of his undoubtedly great qualities, place him second only to Shakespeare, others have pronounced each of his poems "a piece of pure bewilderment," and, repelled by the obscurity of his style, have voted him simply unreadable, a verdict too hastily concurred in by a majority of the reading public. Yet, "to charge him with obscurity," says Mr. Swinburne on the other hand, "is about as accurate as to . . . complain of the sluggish action of the telegraph wire."

These varying estimates of the merits of his poems are due, first, to the material in which the poet worked, and next, to the words in which he clothes his ideas. The reconstruction of society on a utilitarian basis, which marked the first half of the nineteenth

<sup>1</sup> Euripides, one of the three great tragic poets of Athens, was born in Salamis, probably in 480 B.C., and died 406 B.C. He is said to have written seventy-five plays, of which only eighteen are extant.

century, awakened in Browning a reaction to idealism, and a sense of the value of the individual soul, and of the importance of the issues with which it alone can deal. This leads him to depart from the ordinary method of characterisation ; in fact, as he says himself,—

To reverse the method usually adopted by writers whose aim is to set forth any phenomenon of the mind or the passions, by the operation of persons and events ; and that, instead of having recourse to an external machinery of incidents to create and evolve the crisis I desire to produce, I have ventured to display somewhat minutely the mood itself in its rise and progress, and have suffered the agency by which it is influenced and determined, to be generally discernible in its effects alone, and subordinate throughout, if not altogether excluded.

Thus his work tended to become more and more a series of psychological and dramatic studies, and when these, as in *Sordello*, were presented in narrative form, the ever-repeated charge of obscurity is scarcely matter of surprise. And this philosophic analysis and metaphysical thought, this minute personal revelation of the characters of his poems, was conveyed in a medium calculated to enhance its unpopularity.

14. **His Ideals of Form and Thought.**—It was as a lyrical poet that Browning probably achieved his greatest triumphs of expression. His lyrics attain a vigour and movement seldom reached by the more finished art of Tennyson, and at the same time exhibit a minute reproduction of nature's sights and sounds not inferior to, and more spontaneous than, the best work of that poet. In *Home Thoughts from Abroad* we have such lines as these :—

Oh, to be in England  
Now that April's there,  
And whoever walks in England  
Sees, some morning, unaware,  
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf  
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,  
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough  
In England—now.

And in *Love among the Ruins*—

Where the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles,  
Miles on miles  
On the solitary pastures where our sheep  
Half asleep



Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop  
As they crop—  
Was the site once of a city great and gay,  
(So they say)  
Of our country's very capital, its prince  
Ages since  
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far  
Peace or war.

That the man who could write lyrics so full of colour and passion as these, and such rollicking ditties, full of life and movement, as *The Cavalier Tunes*, or the ballad of *How they brought the good news from Ghent to Aix*, should have, as some would say, wilfully preferred the involved and bewildering phrase of *Sordello* or *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country*, must always be puzzling to many. But Browning seems to have set before him the ideal of originality as much in form as in thought, and much in the poems which is obscure and abrupt in expression is the result of doubtful and novel metrical experiments. No poet ever used a greater variety of metres, and no poet ever laid down a more original basis whereon to build up a great poem, than did Browning—in *Pippa Passes* for instance, and in *The Ring and the Book*. In the former a series of detached dramatic incidents is strung together on a no more substantial connecting thread than the chance passing-by of a little Italian work-girl; while in the latter the story of one tragic incident is narrated from the several differing standpoints of the chief actors, of their advocates and supporters, and of the unprejudiced bystander. It might indeed be urged by some that Browning was no less an artist in words than Tennyson, but that the art of the former tended to obscurity, whereas that of the latter realised perfect clarity of expression. But such a superficial distinction between the works of these poets is but an indication of the more serious underlying differences in their modes of thought. Browning, even when most metaphysical, is intensely dramatic in form, while Tennyson is essentially narrative, and this none the less though the latter may be said to have finally achieved some considerable measure of dramatic success in *Becket*, whereas the former never repeated even the qualified success of *Strafford* and *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*. The dramatic instinct led Browning to

condense his expression and to visualise his images in a manner puzzling and disconcerting to the ordinary reader. Let us take for instance a passage wherein each poet enunciates the complaint that the "finder" or "maker" in poetry may go unrecognised, while the mere imitator may catch the public ear and win the popular applause. Tennyson takes the simile of a flower, and produces the following :—

Once in a golden hour  
I cast to earth a seed,  
Up there came a flower,  
The people said a weed.

\* \* \* \* \*  
Then it grew so tall  
It wore a crown of light,  
But thieves from o'er the wall  
Stole the seed by night.

Sow'd it far and wide  
By every town and tower,  
Till all the people cried  
"Splendid is the flower."

Browning characteristically prefers an abstruse metaphor—the metaphor of the Tyrian purple dye—and writes :—

Hobbs hints blue—straight he turtle eats.  
Nobbs prints blue—claret crowns his cup.  
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats—  
Both gorge. Who fished the murex<sup>1</sup> up?  
What porridge had John Keats?

But probably one of the greatest obstacles to Browning's progress in public favour has been his fondness for *outré* and barbarous rimes, such as these from *Old Pictures in Florence* :—

I that have haunted the dim San Spirito<sup>2</sup>  
(Or was it rather the Ognissanti?)<sup>2</sup>  
Patient on altar steps planting a weary toe,  
Nay I shall have it yet! Detur amanti!<sup>3</sup>

15. **His Message.**—Thus the culminating effect of a philosophic theory of the relation of man to the universe, or a subtle psychological study, veiled in monologue of obscure phrase, and often

<sup>1</sup> The shell-fish which furnished the celebrated purple dye—the Tyrian purple of the ancients.

<sup>2</sup> San Spirito and Ognissanti (All Saints), two well-known churches in Florence.

<sup>3</sup> "May it be given to him that loves."

disfigured by forced and unnatural rimes, naturally accounts for the comparatively limited audience that Browning has secured. His poetry has, nevertheless, produced an effect on the thought of his time not inferior to that of the prose of Carlyle. His great contemporary, Tennyson, was profoundly affected by the pessimistic tone of the nineteenth century, and may be said to have slowly won his way from the morbid gloom of *Maud* to the fearless certainty of his last words in *Crossing the Bar*. But it was far otherwise with Browning. His cheery optimism, which bases a hope on even the imperfections of man, which seeks for and finds a promise of ultimate good in evil itself, his unquestioning belief in a personal God, his unshaken faith in love and self-sacrifice as a world-wide basis for good in all the creeds, have done much to sweeten, strengthen, and elevate our modern life. And rugged and even repellent as his style can be, he is not without phrases of faultless felicity, such as,—

Oh the little more, and how much it is !  
And the little less, and what worlds away !

or,—

\*  
But they make not up, I think,  
The marvel of a soul like thine, earth's flower  
She holds up to the softened gaze of God ;

or such an instance of alliterative onomatopoeia as,—

The wind with its wants and its infinite wail.

In descriptive passages, too, Browning excels in vividness of pictorial effect, as witness the opening lines of *Pippa Passes* :—

Day !  
Faster and more fast,  
O'er night's brim, day boils at last :  
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim  
Where spurting and suppressed it lay,  
For not a froth flake touched the rim  
Of yonder gap in the solid gray  
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away ;  
But forth one wavelet, then another curled,  
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,  
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast  
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the world.

Perhaps Browning's smoothest, and therefore least characteristic,

work is to be found in his Hellenic poems—*Balaustion's Adventure*, and its sequel *Aristophanes' Apology*,<sup>1</sup> the latter a translation of the *Hercules Furens* of Euripides, the dramatist somewhat uncritically eulogised by Elizabeth Barrett Browning as,—

Our Euripides, the human,  
With his droppings of warm tears,  
And his touches of things common  
Till they rose to touch the spheres.

But the poet's message of faith and hopefulness to his generation is best summed up in the lines from the Epilogue to *Asolando*, published, as we have seen, on the day of his death:—

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,  
Never doubted clouds would break,  
Never dreamed, though right was worsted, wrong would triumph,  
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
Sleep to wake.

(i) "On the whole, if we subtract Browning's failures, mainly failures of expression, there remains a great body of remarkable poetry, remarkable for its thought, for its psychological insight, for the influence it has exercised on the best minds of the last century, which may well warrant a little trouble in the disentangling. Already what may be called the æsthetic interest in Browning is on the wane. As a fashion it needs must go. But besides the literary modists there are in every generation the lovers of literature. To these we may leave in all confidence the works of Robert Browning, sure that they cannot miss seeing the treasure of true if alloyed gold that lies there."—MARGARET L. WOODS.

(ii) "While Tennyson and the poets of culture bring the era to a close, Browning's subjects and methods, so unique, so independent of contemporary fashions, seem prophetic of a new. If Tennyson sums up the gains to the higher civilisation, Browning must be regarded as one of the renewers of the world's thought, a master builder who quarries his own marbles—somewhat roughly, it must be confessed—fashions and finds his own tools, and builds on his own plans."—PROFESSOR MACNEILE DIXON.

(iii) "If there is any great quality more perceptible than another in Mr. Browning's intellect, it is his decisive and incisive faculty of thought, his sureness and intensity of perception, his rapid and trenchant resolution of aim."—ALGERNON SWINBURNE.

(iv) "For myself, when urging on folk the study of Browning, I always admit his faults, his often failure in moulding his verse, his want of lucidity, his habit of going off at tangents, etc.; but I insist that for manliness, strength, vividness, penetration, humour, buoyancy, characterisation, insight into music and art, he has no equal in modern poetry."—F. J. FURNIVALL.

<sup>1</sup> Aristophanes (? 446—? 380 B.C.) was the greatest of Greek comic poets.



16. **Elizabeth Barrett Browning** (1806—1861).—The life of Elizabeth Barrett is closely bound up with that of her illustrious husband, Robert Browning, though her work is completely independent of his. The child of a wealthy West Indian planter, she was born at Coxhoe Hall, near Durham, on March 6th, 1806. An injury to her spine in her fifteenth year accentuated by what she terms "a common cough, striking on an unsubstantial frame," rendered her an invalid for many years. In 1840 the shock caused by the drowning of her favourite brother very nearly occasioned her death, and necessitated her living for weeks together in a darkened room. This life of forced inaction seems, however, only to have stimulated her mental activity. She had acquired an exceptional knowledge of the Greek classics, and had ransacked English literature in poetry and fiction from end to end. She had already, in 1826, published an *Essay on Mind*, a poetic attempt in the style of Pope; and in 1833, a translation of the *Prometheus Vincit* of Aeschylus. She soon made many literary acquaintances, amongst whom Miss Mitford and Harriet Martineau were constant correspondents. In 1838 another volume of poems appeared, and six years later she published *The Drama of Exile*, with which were included *The Vision of Poets*, *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*, and *The Rhyme of the Duchess May*. The invalid had now become famous, and marvellous stories circulated concerning her rapidity of composition, often, indeed, too evident in the workmanship, and her opinion on literary matters was eagerly sought. Amongst the warmest admirers of her last volume was Robert Browning, to whom she was married in 1846 under circumstances already described. Henceforth the life of Elizabeth Barrett Browning was spent mainly in Italy, chiefly in the old Florentine palace known as Casa Guidi, and celebrated by her in *Casa Guidi Windows*, "a simple story of personal impression," which was only completed and finally published in 1851. In Casa Guidi her only child, Robert Barrett Browning, was born in 1849. Two years previously she had privately printed *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (which have, it may be remarked, nothing to do with Portugal or the Portuguese people), included in the edition of her works which appeared in 1850. These sonnets are in reality the record of her wooing by her husband, and are amongst

the noblest and most genuine love-poems in the language. In 1856 Mrs. Browning, during a visit to England, completed her longest poem, *Aurora Leigh*, on which she had been at work for three years, but of which her husband had not been allowed to see a line till the year of publication. Four years later Mrs. Browning issued a collection of poems on Italian politics under the title of *Poems before Congress*; and in June 1861 she died, her last words being, "It is beautiful."

17. **Her Work.**—The poems of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, which achieved a remarkable success in her own day, have by no means maintained their position in the public estimation. The cause of this is to be looked for in that enforced seclusion from all social intercourse which was, for many years, the lot of Miss Barrett. The readers of to-day, largely owing to the effect of her husband's poems, have come to expect more accurate characterisation, more psychological analysis, than she was capable of. In her longest poem, *Aurora Leigh*, the promised imaginary biography is a vague and shadowy presentment; indeed, none of the characters portrayed can be said to strike us as realities, with the single exception of "Miss Leigh," the strait-laced English aunt of the half-Italian heroine. A striking defect in her poems is the extraordinary licence which the author allowed herself in the use of rimes, and in the coining of new words. One would naturally attribute the former to the haste with which she is known to have composed, were it not that she deliberately defends her action in a letter, in which she says, "A great deal of attention—far more than it would take to rhyme with conventional accuracy—have I given to the subject of rhymes, and have determined in cold blood to hazard some experiments." And this is a stanza from the poem under discussion:—

Gods of Hellas, Gods of Hellas,  
Can you listen in your silence?  
Can your mystic voices tell us  
Where ye hide? In floating islands,  
With a wind that evermore  
Keeps you out of sight of shore?  
Pan, Pan is dead.

This licence was finally carried so far as to rime "angels" to "candles," and "mountains" to "dauntings." In the coinage of

words, too, we find "fantasque," "vatic,"<sup>1</sup> and "humiliant," and the unforgivable "oftly" to rime with "softly." But in *The Rhyme of the Duchess May* we find such exquisitely musical lines as the following:—

O the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,  
And I said in underbreath,—All our life is mixed with death,  
And who knoweth which is best?  
O the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,  
And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our incompleteness,  
Round our restlessness, His rest.

In her shorter pieces, and especially in her sonnets, her prevailing faults are of less frequent occurrence. In her *Sonnets from the Portuguese* she probably reaches her highest sustained level, the sonnet's "narrow room" curbing her redundancy:—

If thou must love me let it be for naught  
Except for love's sake only. Do not say,  
"I love her for her smile—her look—her way  
Of speaking gently—for a trick of thought  
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought  
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day"—  
For these things in themselves, beloved, may  
Be changed, or change for thee—and love so wrought  
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for  
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry—  
Since one might well forget to weep who bore  
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby.  
But love me for love's sake, that evermore  
Thou may'st love on through love's eternity.

And among her shorter pieces *The Cry of the Children* will not easily die, and the pathetic *Romance of the Swan's Nest* and *Bertha in the Lane* will always touch a responsive chord. Such a stanza as the following from *The Cry of the Human* haunts the reader as vocalising the unspoken sadness of humanity, and in simple effectiveness is probably unsurpassed in the poetry of the century:—

"There is no God!" the foolish saith,  
But none, "There is no sorrow"; —  
And nature oft the cry of faith  
In bitter need will borrow.  
Eyes which the preacher could not school  
By wayside graves are raised;  
And lips say "God be pitiful,"  
Who ne'er said "God be praised."

<sup>1</sup> For "prophetic"—from Latin *vates*, a prophet.

"Her deep tenderness, and genuineness of feeling, showing themselves in such poems as *The Cry of the Children*, or *Cowper's Grave*, will never fail of their rightful power. She has touched all the chief human relationships—that of friend and friend, that of husband and wife, that of mother and child—with an exquisite insight, and sensitiveness, and delicacy; and her style, when she touches them, attains almost always that noble and severe simplicity which is so greatly to be preferred to her most luscious and copious versification."—  
WILLIAM T. ARNOLD (*Ward's English Poets*).

18. **Arthur Hugh Clough** (1819—1861), was born at Liverpool, and educated under Dr. Arnold at Rugby and at Oxford, where he wasted his powers in fruitless theological discussions, born of his keen interest in the Oxford Movement, by which he was for a time carried away, as he says, "like a straw drawn up the draught of a chimney." His poetry has been the subject of much critical controversy, but he never succeeded in catching the public ear. This is partly due to his fondness for the hexameter, in which his longer poems are written; and though in his handling of that metre he achieved a success unusual in the English tongue, he was never able to secure popular favour for it as a medium of expression. On leaving Oxford in 1848 he led a wandering life, residing successively in England, France, Italy, and the United States, and died at Florence in 1861. Much of his poetry is devoted to philosophic problems, and to the exposition of the doubt and unrest which marred his spiritual life:—

To spend uncounted years of pain,  
Again, again, and yet again,  
In working out in heart and brain  
The problem of our being here.

But *The Bothie<sup>1</sup> of Tober-na-Vuolich* (1848) is not unduly praised by Matthew Arnold for its "out-of-doors freshness," and had it been cast in another mould might well have achieved a much wider popularity than it enjoys. Notwithstanding its ruggedness and general want of rhythm it contains many fine passages, such as the following:—

Grace is given of God, but knowledge is bought in the market;  
Knowledge needful for all, yet cannot be had for the asking.  
There are exceptional beings, one finds them distant and rarely  
Who, endowed with the vision alike and the interpretation,

<sup>1</sup> A cottage or small hut.



See, by the neighbours' eyes and their own still motions enlightened,  
 In the beginning the end, in the acorn the oak of the forest,  
 In the child of to-day its children to long generations,  
 In a thought or a wish, a life, a drama, an epos.

His lyrics, though generally sad in tone, are sometimes almost perfect in form and expression. Among the best is *The Stream of Life* :—

O stream descending to the sea,  
 Thy mossy banks between,  
 The flowerets blow, the grasses grow,  
 The leafy trees are green.

\* \* \* \* \*

Strong purposes our minds possess,  
 Our hearts' affections fill,  
 We toil and earn, we seek and learn,  
 And thou descendest still.

\* \* \* \* \*

A roar we hear upon thy shore,  
 As we our course fulfil;  
 Scarce we divine a sun will shine  
 And be above us still.

No less remarkable, and marked by a hopefulness unusual in Clough is the vigorous *Say not the Struggle nought availeth* :—

Say not the struggle nought availeth,  
 The labour and the wounds are vain  
 The enemy faints not, nor faileth,  
 And as things have been they remain.

\* \* \* \* \*

And not by eastern windows only,  
 When daylight comes, comes in the light,  
 In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,  
 But westward, look, the land is bright.

Clough will, however, always be better known as the subject of Arnold's beautiful elegy *Thyrsis* than by his own contributions to Victorian poetry.

"We have a foreboding that Clough . . . will be thought, a hundred years hence, to have been the truest expression in verse of the moral and intellectual tendencies, the doubt and struggle towards settled conviction, of the period in which he lived."—RUSSELL LOWELL.

*B* 19. **Matthew Arnold** (1822—1888).—Hitherto in the present chapter we have had to deal with writers who limited themselves to poetry as a medium for expressing their ideas. The writer

whom we have now to consider is great alike as a poet, and as a writer of the most musical prose; one who combines in himself the broadest scholarship, the highest critical judgment, and the most delicate poetic expression. Matthew Arnold was born at Laleham, in Middlesex, on Christmas Eve, 1822, and was the eldest of the nine children of the celebrated Dr. Thomas Arnold, afterwards headmaster of Rugby School (p. 528). As we have seen in a former chapter, Dr. Arnold in 1832 built a house near Grasmere, so that the boy doubtless early made the acquaintance of Wordsworth, of whom he was always a consistent admirer and champion. Matthew Arnold was educated at Winchester and Rugby schools, and in 1840 won an open scholarship at Balliol College, Oxford. Like Tennyson at Cambridge, Arnold won the Newdigate poetry prize at Oxford in 1843, his subject, *Cromwell*, being a more promising one than Tennyson's *Timbuctoo*. On leaving Oxford in 1845, Arnold was for a time an assistant master at Rugby, but two years later became private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, then a member of the Cabinet of Lord John Russell's premiership. In 1849 he published, under the simple initial "A.," *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems*, which proved a failure, and was soon after withdrawn from public circulation. Probably this failure was to a large extent due to the classical mould in which the unrimed metre of the principal poem was cast. In 1851 Matthew Arnold was appointed by his political chief to an inspectorship of schools; and he held this post till near his death, continuing a hard-working public servant, devoted to his duties, and bringing to them an unequalled aptitude as well as a balanced enthusiasm. In 1852 he published, still under the initial "A.," *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems*, which again completely failed to arrest the public attention, and of which not fifty copies had been sold when it too was withdrawn. Nothing daunted by the apathy of an inattentive public, the poet one year later issued another volume, this time with his own name on the title page. The new venture contained a selection from the poems which had already appeared, together with some new ones; and the whole was prefaced by a short essay on criticism, in which a master-hand is already visible, one which is informed throughout with that

reverence for Greek models—"the unapproached masters of the grand style"—which is the very key-note of the author's attitude towards literature. He was now occupied with one of his greatest and one of his longest poems, *Sohrab and Rustum*, which was published in 1853. The same volume included *The Scholar Gipsy* and other poems, notably the striking lyric *Requiescat*, commencing:—

Strew on her roses, roses  
And never a spray of yew!

In 1855 appeared a second series of *Poems* by Matthew Arnold, containing *Balder Dead* and many of the earlier published pieces, of which his growing reputation now justified the reappearance. In 1857 he obtained the Chair of Poetry at Oxford, which he held for two terms of five years each; and henceforth his own poetical productiveness was very limited, the unsuccessful tragedy *Merope* (1858), with its unmusical, unrhythmical choruses, being his longest work.

20. **Prose Writings and Later Poems.**—In 1865 appeared the *Essays in Criticism*, and here it was abundantly evident that Arnold had found his true vocation. No such attempt to form a canon of criticism had been seen for generations. True he pronounced many false judgments, his estimates of contemporaries being especially faulty; but his main principles, such as the value of classical culture and the necessity of acquaintance with European literature, with the lessons he drew therefrom, did much to cultivate that constructiveness in criticism, that "sweetness and light," which is no unimportant feature in the literature of our day. In 1867 appeared *New Poems*, in which were included *Empedocles on Etna*, republished at the suggestion of Robert Browning, and *Thyrsis*, the monody on the death of his friend Arthur Hugh Clough, which worthily takes its place amongst the few great English elegies. Quite as noticeable is *Dover Beach*, which sums up the mildly morbid and agnostic hopelessness of its author's attitude towards the problems of human life, its joys and sorrows. The following lines, from this poem, give a fair idea of Arnold's musical, irregular verse, at its best:—

The sea of Faith  
 Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
 Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd ;  
 But now I only hear  
 Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
 Retreating, to the breath  
 Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear  
 And naked shingles of the world.

Matthew Arnold now found a new channel into which to divert his versatile literary activity. He had been officially connected with educational questions, he had been by choice a poet, and had always taken a keen interest in political questions; he was now to turn his attention to philosophy and theology. In 1867 he published *Culture and Anarchy*. To this essay we are indebted for the new significance given to Swift's expression, "sweetness and light," in its application to intellectual culture, and for the famous term "Philistines," which he borrowed from the Germans wherewith to brand the English middle class. The "Culture" of the essay is defined by its author as "a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world." This led its author naturally to consider the readjustment, in the light of German Biblical criticism, of our religious beliefs, with which object he produced his theological essays, *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1869), *Literature and Dogma* (1873), and *God and the Bible* (1875). These added little to his literary reputation, and were absolutely futile as a means of accomplishing the object which he had in view; indeed, they may be taken as enunciating a theological position tenable only by their author. In 1886 he finally resigned his position as Inspector of Schools, and received a pension of two hundred and fifty pounds "as a public recognition of service to the poetry and literature of England"; a reward none too munificent when we consider the services he rendered alike to education and to criticism. On April 15th, 1888, whilst staying at Liverpool to meet his married daughter on her return from America, he ran to catch a passing tramway-car, and died suddenly from heart disease.

21. **His Work.**—His work was, as we have seen, as varied as



it was excellent. Words and phrases in his poems have caught the public mind, as they have in those of Shakespeare, Pope, Coleridge, or Tennyson. England is still for us "the weary Titan . . . staggering on to her goal"; the ocean, termed by him—

The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea,

once so described is never forgotten. Life without faith, for us as for him,—

Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarm of struggle and fight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night!

And if the "weary Titan" symbolises England as a whole, her restless modern sons are well summed up in the lines

And see all sights from pole to pole,  
And glance and nod and bustle by—  
And never once possess our soul  
Before we die.

In his prose, too, such lucid descriptions as that of Oxford—"home of lost causes, and forsaken beliefs, and unpopular names, and impossible loyalties"—stick like burrs in the memory. Yet with all his felicity of expression, Arnold's ear for rhythm is at times curiously faulty, and his experiments in classical metres were by no means uniformly happy. His excursions into the domain of politics were fruitless of any adequate result; and in his proposed reconstruction of Christian belief he presented it, as Mr. Gladstone put it, in such a form as to be recognisable neither by friend nor foe. As a critic however—though, as we have said, his judgments of individuals will often be questioned, though many who share his admiration for Wordsworth will not agree in his praise of Byron, and though few of Tennyson's keenest critics would rate him as low as did Matthew Arnold,—yet such essays as *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time*, *Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment*, and *The Literary Influence of Academies*, have had a permanently restraining and regulating effect on modern literary criticism.

(i) "He was an inspector of schools, a literary, social, and political essayist, a religious reformer, and a poet. To the *first* of these pursuits

... he probably gave the largest proportion of his time, and he became one of the most accomplished specialists in that direction whom England possessed; in the *second* pursuit he was the most brilliantly successful; to the *third*, as I believe, he devoted the most anxious and persistent thought; and by the *fourth* pursuit, as a poet, he will, we cannot doubt, be the longest remembered."—FREDERIC W. H. MYERS.

(ii) "It would be too much to say that the principles of criticism for which Mr. Arnold contended were new and original. . . . But it is quite true that these principles were at that time undergoing . . . a phase of neglect; and it is equally true that Mr. Arnold's lucid exposition of these principles, and the singularly fascinating style of the series of papers in which he illustrated them, gave a healthy stimulus and a true direction to English criticism, which . . . since the publication of the *Essays*, it has on the whole preserved."—H. D. TRAILL.

22. **Dante Gabriel Rossetti** (1828—1882), a most interesting personality, great as a poet, and no less great as a painter, was born in London. As his name implies, he was of Italian origin, his father, custodian of bronzes in the Naples Museum under the Bourbons,<sup>1</sup> having had to fly that country owing to his political activities. The future poet was christened Gabriele Charles Dante, but dropped the middle name and inverted the order of the others in later life. His exiled father, an able commentator on Dante, was Professor of Italian Literature at King's College, London, from 1831 to 1854. Dante Gabriel was educated at King's College School, and, having early manifested a taste for literature and painting, was in 1846 admitted as an art student of the Royal Academy. So early as 1849 he had painted "The Girlhood of Mary Virgin," and written *The Blessed Damozel*; and in that year he joined with Holman Hunt and Sir John Millais in launching the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, whose aim they announced to be "to paint nature as it is around them, with the help of modern science." In 1850 he met Miss Elizabeth Eleanor Siddal, a very beautiful girl, for whom he conceived a romantic attachment, and whom he adopted as a pupil; to her in 1860 he was married, but two years later she died from the effects of an overdose of laudanum, self-administered. This bereavement seriously affected the poet's life; all his poems then existing in manuscript he buried

<sup>1</sup> The Kingdom of Naples was ruled separately from the rest of Italy by a Bourbon (*i.e.* a French) Dynasty from 1735 to 1861. In the latter year the Bourbon king was expelled and his kingdom was incorporated in the United Kingdom of Italy.

in her coffin, whence, at the entreaty of his friends, they were exhumed after an interval of seven years. During the period of his courtship and brief married life he translated and published selections from the early Italian poets of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, including the *Vita Nuova* of Dante. In 1870 he published a volume of *Poems*, which contained all the original verse he had hitherto written, including the buried mss. and several of those sonnets for pictures so distinctive of the work of this painter-poet. His paintings were now well known. The "Beata Beatrix," the "Sibylla Palmifera," and "Dante's Dream," had been already painted; and though in 1881 a second volume of poems appeared with the title *Ballads and Sonnets*, containing the completion of the great sonnet-series *The House of Life*, and the powerful historical ballads of *The White Ship* and *The King's Tragedy*, yet from this time to his death, on Easter Day 1882, he expressed himself rather by his pencil than by his pen.

23. **His Work.**—The poetry of Dante Gabriel Rossetti has received much exaggerated praise, and has been the subject of much hostile criticism. He was undoubtedly a consummate artist in words; and his ballads, though they never caught the simple directness of their elder prototypes, are none the less noble romantic poems, which, in *Sister Helen* and *Rose Mary*, and indeed in the supernatural accessories of *The King's Tragedy*, reach a height of dramatic weirdness perhaps only excelled by Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*. *The Blessed Damozel* will always be appreciated for the extreme beauty of its imagery, and the faultless music of its language. Such lines as,—

Her hair that lay along her back  
Was yellow like ripe corn,—

or the vivid description of the "rampart of God's house,"—

It lies in Heaven, across the flood  
Of ether, as a bridge,  
Beneath the tides of day and night,  
With flame and darkness ridge  
The void, as low as where this earth  
Spins like a fretful midge,—

show the imaginative power of the poet-painter to portray alike the real and the ideal.

His translations of the mediaeval Italian poets, while preserving faithfully the spirit and reproducing the words of their originals, are yet instinct with his own personality. His unfailing judgment, in choosing melodious English expression for the musical language of these early Italians, gives to the translations the vigour and harmony of original poems. From the old English ballad he borrowed the burden or refrain, which he uses with great effect, especially in *Sister Helen*, where he varies it skilfully for each verse; and, in a translation from Villon,<sup>1</sup> for the old French burden,—

“Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?”—

he has created the beautiful English equivalent,—

“But where are the snows of yester-year?”

It is, however, in the wonderful sonnet-series, *The House of Life*, that we must look for the supreme effort of Rossetti's poetic genius. One flower out of this fair chaplet of verse must serve as an example—the sonnet *Lost Days* :—

The lost days of my life until to-day,  
 What were they, could I see them on the street  
 Lie as they fell? Would they be ears of wheat  
 Sown once for food, but trodden into clay?  
 Or golden coins squandered and still to pay?  
 Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet?  
 Or such spilt water as in dreams must cheat  
 The undying throats of Hell, athirst alway?

I do not see them here; but after death  
 God knows I know the faces I shall see,  
 Each one a murdered self, with low last breath.  
 “I am thyself,—what hast thou done to me?”  
 “And I—and I—thyself,” (lo! each one saith,)  
 “And thou thyself to all eternity!”

The structure of this sonnet, the striking series of metaphors in the octave, expressive of an ever-increasing burden of responsibility, and the powerful climax of the sextett, must give it a high place amongst the greatest sonnets of the language.

<sup>1</sup> François Villon, an early French poet, was born at Paris 1431, and died *circa* 1484. He led a reckless and miserable life, and was condemned to death under Louis XI., but had his sentence commuted to banishment.



"Perhaps, if one had to name a single composition of Rossetti's to a reader who desires to make acquaintance with him for the first time, it is *The King's Tragedy* one would select—that poem so moving, so popularly dramatic and lifelike. . . . His characteristic—his really revealing—work lay in the adding to poetry of fresh poetic material, of a new order of phenomena."—WALTER PATER.

24. Of the multitude of lesser singers, we can but briefly mention a few representative names. **Richard H. Barham** (1788—1845), a Kentish clergyman who, after dabbling in literature as a writer of minor fiction, was happily inspired with the idea of *The Ingoldsby Legends*. They were commenced owing to his desire to aid his old schoolfellow, Bentley, the publisher of *Bentley's Miscellany*. These laughable tales in verse have taken a high place in English humorous literature, and though wanting in that serious purpose which sometimes dignifies Hood, have become the model for all such *jeux d'esprit*. Though his work is unequal and at times somewhat vulgar, yet few men have added more to the gaiety of his countrymen. With him may be coupled **Edward Lear** (1812—1888), who commenced life as an illustrator of natural history, but found his true vocation in writing *The Book of Nonsense* for the grandchildren of his patron, the Earl of Derby. These inconsequent rimes have delighted both children and adults, and have produced hosts of imitations. He died at San Remo in 1888.

At the head of writers of the religious poetry of this period stands **John Keble** (1792—1866), who may be regarded as the poet of the Oxford Movement. He spent his life as an unassuming parish clergyman, but for eight years devoted his leisure to the production of *The Christian Year* (1827), of which probably more copies have been sold than of any volume of purely religious poems ever published.

Of patriotic ballad literature the most noticeable is the work of **William Edmonstoune Aytoun** (1813—1865), son of an Edinburgh Writer to the Signet. His descent on both sides from old Scottish families, and the literary tastes of his parents, kindled in him a love of ballad poetry; but his first efforts were translations from the German and humorous poems. In 1845 he was appointed Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the University of Edinburgh, a chair which he filled with great distinction. In 1848 he published *Lays of the Cavaliers*, dealing with some of the most dramatic incidents in Scottish history. His longest poem, *Rothwell*, appeared in 1856. He was a constant contributor to *Blackwood*, and married the youngest daughter of Professor Wilson ("Christopher North").

The period has been especially prolific in writers for the stage. As an author of unacted drama, **Sir Henry Taylor** (1800—1886) achieved considerable reputation. Like many other writers of the Victorian Era, he was a civil servant, holding a post in the Colonial Office. His principal dramas, *Isaac Commens* (1827), *Philip van Artevelde* (1834), and *Edwin the Fair* (1842), are distinguished by loftiness of conception and dignity of expression. He is also the author of some valuable literary criticism in his *Notes from Books*, published in 1849.

**William Allingham** (1828—1889) was born at Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal. Holding a small appointment in the Customs, he contrived to be a frequent visitor to London, where he secured the acquaintanceship of Leigh Hunt and Carlyle, and later of Tennyson and Rossetti. In 1850 he published a volume of *Poems*, dedicated to Leigh Hunt, and in 1854 *Day and Night Songs*. In 1870 he retired from the civil service, and in 1874 succeeded James Anthony Froude as editor of *Fraser's Magazine*. "Though not ranking among the foremost, of his generation, Allingham, when at his best," says Dr. Garnett, "is an excellent poet, simple, clear, and graceful, with a distinct though not obtrusive individuality."

Few more versatile writers are to be found amongst latter-day poets than **Charles Stuart Calverley** (1831—1884), born at Wartley, in Worcestershire, son of a clergyman, whose father had changed the original family name of Calverley for that of Blayds. Charles Stuart was educated at Marlborough and Harrow schools, and won the Balliol scholarship at Oxford by his remarkable talent for Latin verse. After a year at Oxford he left that University for Cambridge, where he won the Craven scholarship, and numerous other classical distinctions, and was elected Fellow of Christ's, after taking a first-class in the Classical Tripos of 1856. He was a clever caricaturist, had some musical taste, and a perfect ear for turns of verse, which, combined with a keen sense of the ridiculous, has made Calverley the first parodist of his day. In 1862 appeared *Verses and Translations*; he translated *Theocritus* in 1869, and in 1872 published *Fly Leaves*, containing delightful parodies of Tennyson, Browning, and others. His highest powers are displayed in his classical translations, in which he evinces an extraordinary ability to catch the spirit of the original; and, saturated as he was with Virgil, he showed no less aptitude in finding Latin expression for English verse. His examination-paper on *Pickwick* is the cleverest parody of latter-day methods of examination that has ever appeared.

## GEOFFREY CHAUCER (1340—1400)

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1340	Edward III. reigns. Battle of Sluys. Gunpowder invented.	Robert of Brunne died. John Gower born 1325.	Chaucer born probably in Thames Street, London. Father a vintner or tavern-keeper.
1357	Poitiers the year before.		Chaucer becomes a page in the service of the Duchess of Clarence.
1359	Edward III. invades France.		Chaucer taken prisoner in France, and ransomed by Edward III. after the Peace of Brétigny (1360).
1366	Richard II. born.	English appointed to be used in the law-courts (1362).	Chaucer, probably about this time, marries Philippa Roet, sister to John of Gaunt's third wife, Katharine Swynford.
1367	Victory of the Black Prince at Navarrete, in Spain.		Chaucer receives a life pension as one of the Yeomen of the King's Chamber.
1369	The Black Death in England.	East Midland dialect gradually becoming the King's (or standard) English.	Chaucer's first important original poem on the DEATH OF THE DUCHESS BLANCHE, Gaunt's first wife.
1370-78	Richard II. accedes, 1377.	Sir John Mandeville said to have died 1372.	Chaucer serves as a diplomatist abroad.
1374	Loss of English dominions in France, except Calais, Bordeaux, and Bayonne.		Chaucer appointed Comptroller of Customs to the Port of London.
1386	Council of Eleven controls the kingdom.	John Wyclif, translator of the Bible, died 1385.	Chaucer Knight of the Shire for Kent. At work on THE CANTERBURY TALES.
1388	Battle of Otterburn ( <i>Chery Chaucer</i> ).		
1389	Richard II.'s absolute government.		Chaucer appointed Clerk of the King's Works at Westminster and the Tower.
1400	Accession of Henry IV. the year before.	William Langland died.	Chaucer dies; buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

## SIR THOMAS MORE (1478—1535)

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1478	Edward IV.'s reign. Murder of the Duke of Clarence.	Caxton printing in England.	More born in Cheap-side, London.
1494	Henry VII.'s reign. Burning of Lollards.		More studies at Oxford under the famous scholars, Colet and Linacre.
1498	Savonarola burnt for heresy at Florence. Vasco da Gama's voyage to India.	Erasmus first visits England. Greek began to be taught in England about this time.	More meets Erasmus; both men the most enlightened and cultured intellects of their time.
1509	Henry VIII. accedes. Marries Katharine of Aragon.	William Dunbar, the 'Chaucer of Scotland,' writing.	More takes service under the King.
1513	Battles of the Spurs and Flodden. Borneo and Java discovered.	Gawain Douglas's translation of Virgil's 'Aeneid' (first verse translation of any Latin author).	Writes his HISTORY OF EDWARD V. AND RICHARD III.
1516	Mary (I.) born. Rio de la Plata discovered.	Erasmus edits the New Testament.	More's UTOPIA published (in Latin).
1521	Luther appears before the Diet of Worms. Henry VIII. styled 'Defender of the Faith' by the Pope.		More Treasurer of the Exchequer.
1523	Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, invades France.		More Speaker of the House of Commons.
1529	Fall of Cardinal Wolsey.	Tyndale's New Testament (in English) in use.	More Lord Chancellor.
1532	Payment of first fruits to the Pope forbidden. Cranmer Archbishop of Canterbury.		More resigns the Chancellorship.
1534	Severance from Roman Communion. Act of Supremacy of the King in the Church.		More and Bishop Fisher refuse the Oath of Supremacy, and are imprisoned.
1535	Bishop Fisher executed. Rise of Thomas Cromwell to power. Suppression of smaller monasteries.	Miles Coverdale's Bible. Erasmus dies next year.	More brought to the block. His head exposed on London Bridge.



## EDMUND SPENSER (1552—1599)

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1552	Edward VI.'s second Prayer Book. First English ship to Russia.	Sir Walter Raleigh born.	Spenser born in London.
1569	Northern rebellion in favour of Mary Queen of Scots.	Thomas Dekker, the dramatist, born (?).	Spenser entered at Pembroke Hall, Cambridge.
1579	Desmond's Rebellion in Munster.		Spenser's SHEPHERD'S CALENDAR.
1580	Drake completed the circumnavigation of the globe.	Sir Philip Sidney's 'Arcadia.'	Spenser becomes Secretary to the Lord Deputy of Ireland. Ireland thenceforth his home.
1588	The Armada.	Thomas Hobbes born.	Spenser living at Kilcolman, co. Cork, and writing THE FAERIE QUEENE.
1590	Walsingham died. Trinity College, Dublin, founded a year later.	In this year were met in London Spenser, Chapman, Drayton, Shakespeare, Bacon, Raleigh, Ben Jonson, and Marlowe.	The first three books of THE FAERIE QUEENE appeared.
1594	Martin Frobisher killed at the taking of Brest.	Shakespeare's 'Lucrece.'	THE AMORETTI and EPITHALAMION.
1596	Cadiz taken by Howard and Essex.	Chapman's 'Homer.' Raleigh wrote his 'Discovery of Guiana.'	Last part of THE FAERIE QUEENE.
1598	Edict of Nantes. Irish Rebellion.	Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander.' Shakespeare's '2 Henry IV.'	Kilcolman burnt by rebel Irish. Spenser flies for his life from the burning house.
1599	Essex Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.	Ben Jonson's 'Every Man out of his Humour.' Shakespeare's 'Henry V.'	Spenser dies (it is said) in poverty at a tavern in Westminster. Buried in the Abbey.

## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564—1616)

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1564	Treaty of Troyes with France. Persecution of the Puritans.	Christopher Marlowe born.	Shakespeare born at Stratford-on-Avon. Father a fell-monger and glover.
1575	Elizabeth offered the Crown of the Netherlands. Leicester entertains Elizabeth at Kenilworth.	John Marston born. Ben Jonson two years old.	Shakespeare probably taken to see the Kenilworth masques and mummeries. Cf. <i>MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM</i> , II. i. 148-168.
1578	Drake on his voyage round the world.	The publication of all books now subject to the license of the Star Chamber.	Money troubles of Shakespeare's father. Shakespeare probably removed from school.
1582	Edinburgh University founded.		Contract of marriage with Anne Hathaway.
1583	Trade opened with Turkey. Ecclesiastical Commission given absolute power over the Church.	The dramatist, Massinger, born.	Shakespeare's eldest child, Susannah, born.
1585	Drake takes Domingo and Cartagena, and brings back the potato from Virginia.		The twins, Hamnet and Judith Shakespeare, born.
1586	Trial of Mary Queen of Scots.	The dramatist, Ford, born. Sir Philip Sidney killed at Zutphen.	Shakespeare prosecuted, about this date, by Sir Thomas Lucy for deer-stealing. Probably went to London this year.
1589-90	Death of Walsingham ('90). The Catholic League defeated by Henry IV. at Ivry ('90).	First three books of Spenser's 'Faerie Queene.'	Shakespeare's career as a playwright begins. <i>LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST</i> perhaps his first play.
1592	Presbyterian Church established in Scotland.	Greene, the dramatist, died.	Shakespeare an actor and rising playwright.
1593	Act to compel attendance at the Church of England.	Marlowe died, stabbed in a brawl.	Shakespeare's first published work, <i>VENUS AND ADONIS</i> .
1594	Martin Frobisher died.	Spenser's 'Amoretti' and 'Epithalamion.' First four books of Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity.	Shakespeare acts in two comedies at Greenwich Palace. <i>LUCRECE</i> .

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1596	Essex and Howard take Cadiz	Bacon's 'Essays' published the following year.	Shakespeare buys the house of 'New Place' at Stratford.
1598	Edict of Nantes. O'Neill's Irish rebellion. Burleigh died.	George Peele died (1597). Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander.'	MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR, said to have been written in fourteen days at Elizabeth's command.
1599	Essex sent to Ireland.	Spenser died. Marlowe's 'Edward II.' B. Jonson's 'Every Man out of his Humour.'	HENRY V. Shakespeare connected with the Globe Theatre in Southwark. Becomes a theatrical shareholder and moneyed man.
1600	East India Company founded.	Hooker died.	AS YOU LIKE IT.
1601	Essex executed.	Nash, the dramatist, died.	Shakespeare's father dies. JULIUS CAESAR.
1602	First regular Poor Law. Spanish Fleet for Ireland defeated off Dover.		HAMLET. Shakespeare buys 107 acres near Stratford.
1603	Elizabeth dies. James I. accedes. Plot to enthrone Arabella Stuart. Raleigh sent to the Tower.	Thomas Dekker's 'Wonderful Year.'	Shakespeare acts in Jonson's play of 'Sejanus' at the Globe.
1605	Gunpowder Plot.	Bacon's 'Advancement of Learning.' Jonson's 'Volpone.'	KING LEAR. Shakespeare buys more land near Stratford.
1607	Virginia settled.		ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA. Eldest daughter married.
1608	Duties on exports and imports exacted by James I.	John Milton born.	Shakespeare's mother died. CORIOLANUS (?)
1611-13	Ulster colonised ('11). First English factory at Surat ('12).	Samuel Butler born ('12). First part of Drayton's 'Polyolbion' and Webster's 'White Devil.'	Shakespeare sells his shares in the Globe.
1613	London supplied with water from the New River.	Jeremy Taylor born.	Though living mostly in Stratford, Shakespeare buys a house in London near the Blackfriars Theatre. HENRY VIII.
1616	Raleigh released from the Tower.	Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Scornful Lady.'	Shakespeare dies. Buried in Stratford Parish Church.

## JOHN MILTON (1608—1674)

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1608	Puritan emigration from England to Virginia.	Edward Hyde, Lord Clarendon, born in the same year as Milton.	John Milton born at the Spread Eagle in Bread Street Cheap-side.
1611	Order of Baronets instituted.	Authorised Version of the Bible published.	
1616		Shakespeare died, April 23rd.	
1618	Bacon Lord Chancellor. Raleigh executed.		
1620	The Pilgrim Fathers land in Massachusetts.	Andrew Marvell born (1621) (died four years after Milton).	Milton sent to St. Paul's School.
1623	Visit of Charles, Prince of Wales, to Spain.	First Folio of Shakespeare's Plays published.	
1625	James I. dies. Charles I. marries Henrietta Maria of France.		Milton pensioner at Christ's College, Cambridge.
1628	Petition of Right.	John Bunyan born.	Milton prints his VACATION EXERCISE.
1629	Imprisonment of Sir J. Eliot and eight other Members of Parliament.		Milton takes his B.A. Prints the NATIVITY ODE.
1631	Tilly takes Magdeburg.	Michael Drayton died. Dr. Donne died.	Milton prints SONNET I.
1632	Laud and Strafford join in the policy of 'Thorough.'	John Locke born.	Milton takes his M.A. Returns to Horton for five years, writes L'ALLEGRO, IL PENSEROSO, COMUS, etc.
1637	Prynne punished by Star Chamber.	Ben Jonson died.	Milton's mother died, and his friend Edward King (LYCIDAS).
1638	Scotch National Covenant.		Milton goes abroad.
1640	Short Parliament from April 13th to May 5th. Long Parliament meets November 3rd.		Milton resides in St. Bride's Churchyard; educates his nephews, the Phillipses, there.
1641	Strafford (Wentworth) executed.	Sir John Suckling died.	Milton writes several pamphlets.



## HISTORY

## LITERATURE

## LIFE

- |      |   |  |   |
|------|---|--|---|
| 1642 | Charles I. tries to arrest the 'Five Members.' Raises his standard at Nottingham. Battle of Edgehill. | Isaac Newton born.                                 | Milton writes AN APOLOGY AGAINST A PAMPHLET CALLED 'A MODEST CONFUTATION.'                  |
| 1643 | Hampden dies—wounded in the Battle of Chalgrove. First Battle of Newbury; Falkland falls.             |  | Milton marries Mary Powell.   |
| 1644 | Marston Moor. Self-denying Ordinance passed.  |  | Milton writes the AREOPAGITICA.   |
| 1645 | Execution of Laud.  |  |   |
| 1649 | Execution of Charles I. House of Lords abolished. Cromwell in Ireland.                                | Drummond of Hawthornden died.                      | Milton is made Latin (Foreign) Secretary to the Council, and writes the EIKONOKLASTES, etc. |
| 1651 | Charles II. crowned at Scone; is defeated by Cromwell at Worcester.                                   |  | Milton writes PRO POPULO ANGLICANO DEFENSIO.  |
| 1652 | Dutch War: Admiral Blake against Van Tromp.   |  |   |
| 1653 | Long Parliament dissolved.  | Walton's 'Complete Angler' published.              | Milton's first wife dies.   |
| 1656 | The Republican leaders (Vane, Rich, and Harrison) imprisoned.   |  | Milton marries his second wife, Catherine Woodcock.   |
| 1658 | Death of Cromwell.  |  | Death of Milton's second wife.  |
| 1660 | General Monk enters London. Restoration of the Stuarts.   |  | Milton engaged on more pamphlets.   |
| 1664 | The Conventicle Act.  | Edmund Waller's 'Poems' published.                 | Milton marries Elizabeth Minshull.  |
| 1667 | The Dutch Fleet in the Medway.  | Jeremy Taylor and Abraham Cowley died. Swift born. | PARADISE LOST sold to Simmons.  |
| 1670 | Declaration of Indulgence two years later.  |  | PARADISE REGAINED and SAMSON AGONISTES published.   |
| 1674 | Peace with Holland.   | Edward Hyde, Lord Clarendon, died.                 | Death of Milton, November 8th.  |

## JOHN DRYDEN (1631—1700)

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1631	Charles I. governs without a Parliament.	Massinger's play, the 'Maid of Honour.' George Herbert's 'Temple' two years later.	Dryden born at Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire.
1650	Battle of Dunbar.	Milton's 'Eikonoklastes' finished.	Leaves Westminster School for Trinity College, Cambridge.
1654	Cromwell Lord Protector.	Walton's 'Complete Angler,' a year previously.	Death of his father, Erasmus Dryden.
1657	Cromwell refuses the title of King.	Baxter's 'Call to the Unconverted.'	Comes to London.
1658	Death of Cromwell, September 3rd.	Lovelace died.	Writes HEROIC STANZAS on the death of Cromwell.
1660	Restoration of Charles II.	Cowley's 'Ode on the Restoration.'	Writes ASTREA REDUX.
1663	Licensing Act in restraint of printing (1662).	Second part of Butler's 'Hudibras.'	First play, THE WILD GALLANT, acted, February; marries Lady Elizabeth Howard, December.
1665	Great Plague of London.	Earl of Dorset's 'To All you Ladies.'	Writes THE INDIAN EMPEROR.
1666	Great Fire of London.	Milton wrote 'Samson Agonistes.'	Writes ANNUS MIRABILIS (published 1667).
1668	The Triple Alliance.	Shadwell's 'Sullen Lovers.'	ESSAY OF DRAMATIC POESY.
1670	Treaty of Dover.	Buckingham writes 'The Rehearsal': acted 1671.	Appointed Poet Laureate. Writes THE CONQUEST OF GRANADA.
1672	Declaration of Indulgence.	Milton's 'Paradise Regained' and 'Samson Agonistes,' a year previously.	Writes MARRIAGE À LA MODE and LOVE IN A NUNNERY.
1678	The Popish Plot.	Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress' (first part).	Writes ALL FOR LOVE.
1681	Scotch Test Act. Trial of the Earl of Argyll.	Thomas Burnet's 'Sacred Theory of the Earth.'	Writes ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL and THE MEDAL.
1682	William of Orange visits Charles II.	Otway's 'Venice Preserved.'	Writes MACFLECKNOE and RELIGIO LAICI.

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1685	Death of Charles II. Battle of Sedgemoor.	Otway died.	Writes THRENODIA AUGUSTALIS.
1686	Court of High Com- mission re-established under Jeffreys.	Thomas Tickell born.	Becomes a Roman Catholic.
1687	Tyrconnel Lord De- puty of Ireland.	Waller died.	Publishes THE HIND AND THE PANTHER and ODE FOR ST. CE- CILIA'S DAY.
1688	William of Orange lands at Torbay.	Pope born.	Deprived of his offices.
1693	Battle of Landen.	Production of Con- greve's first play, 'The Old Bachelor.'	Translates Satires of Juvenal and Persius.
1697	Peace of Ryswick.	Vanbrugh's 'Pro- voked Wife.'	Publishes verse trans- lation of Virgil, and ALEXANDER'S FEAST.
1700	Death of the Duke of Gloucester.	Congreve's 'Way of the World.'	Dryden dies May 1st. Buried in Westminster Abbey.

## ALEXANDER POPE (1688—1744)

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1688	The Revolution. William of Orange lands in Torbay.	Bunyan dies. Gay born.	Pope born in Lombard Street. His father a Roman Catholic, and a linen-draper.
1700	Death of the young Duke of Gloucester, Queen Anne's son, and heir to the throne.	Thomson, author of 'The Seasons,' born. Dryden died.	Pope writes his ODE ON SOLITUDE at Binfield, near Windsor.
1702	William III. dies. Accession of Anne.	Defoe's 'Shortest Way with Dissenters' published.	Pope composes a poem on SILENCE. His education entrusted to several incompetent tutors.
1710	Dr. Sacheverell impeached. Fall of the Whig War Ministry. General Post Office for Britain established.	Sir Richard Steele's <i>Tatler</i> in full vogue.	Pope introduced to London life by Wycherley. Friendship with Addison, Steele, Swift, and Dr. Arbuthnot.
1711	Marlborough disgraced and the Duchess dismissed from the Queen's service.	<i>The Spectator</i> begun by Steele. David Hume born.	Pope's ESSAY ON CRITICISM published.
1714	Accession of George I.	Swift's pamphlet on 'The Public Spirit of the Whigs' published.	Pope translates THE ILIAD (first volume published 1715).
1718	England, Holland, France, and Austria allied against Spain.	Addison dies next year (in 1719).	On his father's death, Pope removes to a villa at Twickenham.
1720	The South Sea Bubble.	Defoe's novel, 'Captain Singleton,' published.	Pope's translation of THE ILIAD completed.
1728	Second Year of George II.'s reign.	Goldsmith born. Thomson's 'Spring' published.	Pope publishes THE DUNCIAD.
1733	Family Compact between France and Spain against the maritime supremacy of England.		Pope publishes the first part of the ESSAY ON MAN, and part of the MORAL ESSAYS.
1735	Walpole at the height of his power.	Dr. Arbuthnot dies.	Pope's EPISTLE TO DR. ARBUTHNOT published.
1744	War with France.	Dr. Johnson publishes his <i>Life</i> of Richard Savage.	Pope dies of dropsy at Twickenham (one year before 'The Forty-five').



## SAMUEL JOHNSON (1709—1784)

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1709	Battle of Malplaquet.	Steele's <i>Tatler</i> started.	Dr. Johnson born at Lichfield.
1716	The Septennial Act.	Thomas Gray born.	Johnson sent to Lichfield Grammar School.
1729	Rise of Methodism under John and Charles Wesley.	Sir Richard Steele died.	Johnson enters Pembroke College, Oxford.
1731	Use of Latin in our statute-books and law-pleadings abolished.	Defoe died. <i>Gentleman's Magazine</i> first appeared.	Johnson's father died, and Johnson leaves Oxford without a degree.
1735	Walpole's third Parliament. Stereotyping invented.	Pope's 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.'	Johnson marries, and opens a school near Lichfield.
1737	Play-house Act, giving the Lord Chamberlain jurisdiction over London theatres.	Gibbon born.	Johnson goes to London with Garrick, with a tragedy ( <i>IRENE</i> ) in his pocket.
1738	Iron-smelting perfected in England.	Hume's 'Treatise of Human Nature' written.	Johnson publishes <i>LONDON</i> .
1748	Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. War of Austrian Succession ended.	Smollett's 'Roderick Random' and Thomson's 'Castle of Indolence' published.	<i>VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES</i> written.
1755	War with France in America.	Gray's 'Progress of Poesy' completed (1754).	Johnson's <i>DICTIONARY</i> completed.
1759	Capture of Quebec by General Wolfe.	Burns born.	Johnson's mother died. He wrote <i>RASSELAS</i> in a week to pay for the funeral.
1762	War declared against Spain.	Wilkes starts <i>The North Briton</i> .	Johnson receives a pension of £300.
1763	Peace of Paris (with France and Spain).		Johnson meets Boswell.
1764	Wilkes expelled from the House of Commons.	Goldsmith's 'Traveler' published.	Literary Club formed, including Johnson, Burke, Goldsmith, and Reynolds.
1779	Siege of Gibraltar by French and Spaniards begun.	Thomas Moore born. Garrick died.	<i>THE LIVES OF THE POETS</i> published (1779-81).
1784	India Bill (for the Government of India) introduced by Pitt.	Cowper's 'Task' written.	Johnson dies. Buried in Westminster Abbey near Dryden, Garrick, and Cowley.

## EDMUND BURKE (1729—1797)

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1730	Walpole's Act for extending colonial trade.	Thomson's 'Seasons.'	Burke born Jan. 1st, 1729 (Old Style).
1731	Treaty of Vienna.	Cowper born. Defoe died.	
1737	Death of Queen Caroline.	Gibbon born.	
1740	Maria Theresa Archduchess of Austria. War of the Austrian Succession begins next year.	Richardson's 'Pamela.'	
1742	Walpole resigned his Ministry.		At school at Ballitore.
1743	Battle of Dettingen.	Fielding's 'Jonathan Wild the Great.'	Entered of Trinity College, Dublin.
1745	Battle of Fontenoy.	Swift died.	
1746	Battle of Culloden.		
1747	Battle of Cape Finis-terre.	Richardson's 'Clarissa.'	
1748	Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle.	Fielding's 'Tom Jones' a year later.	Takes his degree of B.A.
1750			Comes to London. Entered of the Middle Temple.
1751	Death of Frederick Prince of Wales. The 'New Style' adopted in the calendar.	Sheridan born. Gray's 'Elegy.'	
1754	The Duke of Newcastle Prime Minister.	Crabbe born.	
1755	Earthquake at Lisbon.	Johnson's 'Dictionary.'	Adopts literature as a profession.
1756	The Seven Years' War began. The Black Hole of Calcutta.		Marries.
1757	The Battle of Plassey.	Smollett's 'Reprisal' performed in Drury Lane Theatre.	Publishes his VINDICATION OF NATURAL SOCIETY and the INQUIRY INTO THE SUB-LIME AND BEAUTIFUL.
1758	Capture of Louisburg by Wolfe and Amherst.	Johnson's <i>Idler</i> .	Burke's son is born. Gains the friendship of Dr. Johnson and Sir Joshua Reynolds.

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1759	Wolfe takes Quebec.	Robert Burns born.	Founds THE ANNUAL REGISTER.
1760	George II. died.	Goldsmith's 'Citizen of the World.'	
1763	Close of the Seven Years' War.		In Ireland.
1765	Agitation in America against the Stamp Act.	Sterne's 'Tristram Shandy' finished.	Private Secretary to Lord Rockingham.
1766	The Chatham Ministry. Stamp Act repealed.	Goldsmith's 'Vicar of Wakefield.'	M.P. for Wendover.
1768	Boston Riots.	Sterne died.	
1769	Napoleon and Wellington born.		Writes OBSERVATIONS ON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE NATION.
1770	The North Ministry.	Wordsworth born. Chatterton died.	Publishes THOUGHTS ON THE PRESENT DISCONTENTS.
1771	First Partition of Poland.	Walter Scott born.	
1772	Warren Hastings Governor of Bengal.	Coleridge born.	Visits France and sees Marie Antoinette.
1774	American Declaration of Rights.	Goldsmith died. Southey born.	Delivers his SPEECH ON AMERICAN TAXATION.
1775	War declared with America.	Charles Lamb born. Landor born.	Sits as Member for Bristol, and delivers his speech on Conciliation with America.
1776	Declaration of Independence.	Hume died.	
1778	Death of Lord Chat-ham.	'Encyclopaedia Britannica' founded.	
1780	Gordon Riots.	Garrick died a year previously.	Loses his seat at Bristol.
1782	American independence recognised by England.	Cowper's first volume of 'Poems.'	Is appointed Paymaster of the Forces.
1783	The Coalition Ministry. Treaty of Versailles.	Crabbe's 'Village.'	Is elected Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow.
1784	The Pitt Ministry.	Death of Dr. Johnson.	
1785	Buonaparte lieutenant.	De Quincey born.	Travels with Windham in Scotland.
1787	Impeachment of Warren Hastings.	Blake's 'Songs of Innocence.'	
1788		Lord Byron born. The Times newspaper started.	Opens the Impeachment of Warren Hastings.
1789	The French Revolution. Destruction of the Bastille.		
1790		Adam Smith died.	Burke publishes his REFLECTIONS ON THE REVOLUTION IN FRANCE. Breach with Sheridan and Fox.

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1791	Louis XVI. arrested at Varennes in his flight from Paris.	Boswell's 'Life of Johnson.'	
1792	Storming of Seringapatam. Defeat of Tippoo Sahib.	Death of Sir Joshua Reynolds.	
1793	Louis XVI. guillotined Jan. 21st. His queen guillotined Oct. 16th.		
1794	Robespierre guillotined.	Blake's 'Songs of Experience.'	Burke retires from Parliament. Death of Burke's son.
1795	Cape of Good Hope taken.	Keats and Carlyle born.	Burke publishes his LETTER TO A NOBLE LORD.
1796	War with Spain and Holland. Defeat of Austrians by Buonaparte.	Robert Burns died.	LETTERS ON A REGICIDE PEACE.
1797	Naval victories of St. Vincent and Camperdown.		Death of Burke.



## SIR WALTER SCOTT (1771—1832)

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1771	Reports of Parliamentary debates allowed.	Gray died.	Scott born in Edinburgh.
1783	Peace of Versailles.	Crabbe's 'Village.'	Enters Edinburgh University.
1792	March of the men of Marseilles on Paris.	Shelley born. Rogers's 'Pleasures of Memory.'	Called to the Bar.
1797	Naval victories of Cape St. Vincent and Camperdown.	Burke died.	Marries Mlle. Charpentier.
1802-3	Treaty of Amiens, 1802. Battle of Assaye, 1803.	Sara Coleridge born, 1802. James Clarence Mangan born, 1803.	Publishes BORDER MINSTRELSY.
1804	Napoleon Emperor.	Benjamin Disraeli born.	Leaves Lasswade for Ashiestiel.
1805	Battle of Trafalgar.	Southey's 'Madoc.'	LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL.
1808	Peninsular Campaigns begin.	<i>Quarterly Review</i> established (1809).	MARMION.
1810	Battle of Busaco.	Thackeray born (1811). Miss Austen's 'Sense and Sensibility.'	THE LADY OF THE LAKE.
1812	Assassination of Mr. Perceval.	Dickens born.	Purchases Abbotsford. ROKEBY.
1813	Battle of Leipzig.	Byron's 'Giaour' and 'Bride of Abydos.'	BRIDAL OF TRIERMAIN.
1814	Napoleon exiled to Elba.	Wordsworth's 'Excursion.'	WAVERLEY.
1815	Battle of Waterloo.	Byron's 'Hebrew Melodies.'	LORD OF THE ISLES, GUY MANNERING.
1816	Bombardment of Algiers by Lord Exmouth.	Charlotte Brontë born. Shelley's 'Alastor.'	THE ANTIQUARY, OLD MORTALITY.
1817	Suspension of Habeas Corpus Act.	Moore's 'Lalla Rookh.'	
1818	Allies evacuate France.	Keats's 'Endymion.' Shelley's 'Revolt of Islam.'	ROB ROY, HEART OF MIDLOTHIAN.
1819	Massacre of Peterloo.	John Ruskin born. 'George Eliot' born.	BRIDE OF LAMMERMOOR, LEGEND OF MONTROSE.
1820	Death of George III.	John Galt's 'Ayrshire Legatees.' Shelley's 'Prometheus Unbound.'	IVANHOE, THE MONASTERY, THE ABBOT. Made a baronet.

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1821	Greece revolts from Turkey. Napoleon dies.	Shelley's 'Adonais.'	KENILWORTH.
1822	Canning Foreign Secretary.	Shelley drowned. Matthew Arnold born.	THE PIRATE, FORTUNES OF NIGEL.
1823	Criminal Law Reform.	Southey's 'History of the Peninsular War.'	PEVERIL OF THE PEAK, QUENTIN DURWARD.
1824	Recognition by Canning of South American Republics.	Byron died. Landor's 'Imaginary Conversations.'	ST. RONAN'S WELL, REDGAUNTLET.
1825	Financial crisis in England.	Carlyle's 'Life of Schiller.'	THE BETROTHED, THE TALISMAN. Bankruptcy of Constable & Co.
1826	Intervention in Greece of the Great Powers.	Thomas Hood's 'Whims and Oddities.' Keble's 'Christian Year.'	WOODSTOCK.
1827	Battle of Navarino.	William Blake died.	LIFE OF NAPOLEON.
1828	Duke of Wellington Prime Minister.	Lord Lytton's 'Pelham.' D. G. Rossetti born.	FAIR MAID OF PERTH.
1829	Catholic Emancipation Act.	Milman's 'History of the Jews.'	ANNE OF GEIERSTEIN.
1830	Death of George IV.	Tennyson's 'Poems, Chiefly Lyrical.'	LETTERS ON DEMONOLOGY.
1831	Coronation of William IV.	Disraeli's 'Young Duke.'	COUNT ROBERT OF PARIS, CASTLE DANGEROUS. First paralytic stroke. Sails for Italy.
1832	The Reform Bill. Gladstone M.P. for Newark.	Goethe died. Leigh Hunt's Poetical 'Works.'	Scott dies at Abbotsford.

# WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770—1850)

## HISTORY

## LITERATURE

## LIFE

1770	Boston 'Massacre.'	James Hogg born. Chatterton died. Goldsmith's 'Deserted Village.'	Wordsworth born at Cockermouth, in Cum- berland.
1778	Chatham died.	Hazlitt born.	Wordsworth goes to school at Hawkshead.
1787	Pitt's Treaty of Com- merce with France.	Byron born next year.	Wordsworth enters St. John's College, Cambridge.
1790	Middle of George III.'s reign. Rise of the French Jacobins.	Adam Smith died.	Travels in France and Switzerland.
1792	Royalist prisoners put to death in the prisons of Paris.	Shelley and Keble born. Rogers's 'Plea- sures of Memory.'	Wordsworth almost loses his life in the French Reign of Terror.
1793	Louis XVI. guillotined in Paris.	Godwin's 'Inquiry concerning Political Justice.' Mrs. He- mans born. Gilbert White died.	Wordsworth's first poems, the EVENING WALK and DESCRIPTIVE SKETCHES pub- lished.
1795	Warren Hastings ac- quitted. Cape of Good Hope first taken by the British.	Keats and Carlyle born.	Left a legacy of £900. Adopts poetry alone as his 'office upon earth.'
1796	Napoleon's victory over the Austrians at Lodi. Ceylon taken from the Dutch. Rise of the Association of United Irishmen under Wolfe Tone.	Hartley Coleridge born. Issue of 'Poems' by S. T. Coleridge.	Wordsworth settles at Racedown, in Somers- etshire, and meets S. T. Coleridge.
1798	Victory of the Nile. Rebellion of United Irishmen.	W. Savage Landor's 'Gebir.'	Coleridge's and Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads.
1799	Siege of Acre. Jen- ner's discovery of vac- cination promulgated. Washington died.	Tom Hood born. Campbell's 'Pleasures of Hope.'	Settles at Grasmere. Wordsworth hence- forth chief of the 'Lake' poets.
1802	Treaty of Amiens. Napoleon First Con- sul for life.	Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of the great naturalist, died.	Marriage to Mary Hutchinson: 'Her eyes as stars of twi- light fair.'
1803	War with France again. Napoleon's Camp of Invasion at Boulogne. Welles- ley's victory of Assaye.	<i>Edinburgh Review</i> started the year before. Completion of Scott's 'Border Minstrelsy.'	ODE ON IMMORTALITY begun. Journey to Scotland with Cole- ridge. Meets Sir Walter Scott.

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1805	Battles of Trafalgar and Austerlitz.	Scott's 'Lay of the Last Minstrel.'	PRELUDE finished.
1808	Peninsular War begins.	Scott's 'Marmion.'	
1809	Moore's death and victory at Corunna.	Tennyson, Gladstone, and Darwin born. Byron's 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.' Campbell's 'Gertrude of Wyoming.'	At work on THE EXCURSION.
1813	Vittoria and the battles of the Pyrenees. Napoleon defeated at Leipzig.	Scott's 'Bridal of Triermain.'	Appointed Stamp Distributor for Westmorland. Settles at Rydal Mount.
1815	Waterloo.	Scott's 'Lord of the Isles.'	First collected edition of poems published.
1817	Habeas Corpus Act suspended.	Moore's 'Lalla Rookh.'	Wordsworth meets Keats in London.
1820	George III. died.	Keats's 'Hyperion.'	SONNETS ON THE RIVER DUDDON published.
1831	Reform Bill passed House of Commons.	Ebenezer Elliott's 'Corn-law Rhymes.'	Bids farewell to Scott at Abbotsford.
1839	Chartist agitation. Gladstone the 'rising hope of stern and unbending Tories.'	Sydney Smith's 'Essays.' Carlyle's 'Chartism.'	D.C.L. at Oxford—presented by Keble.
1843	Secession of the Free Church in Scotland. Gladstone President of the Board of Trade.	Southey died. Hood's 'Song of the Shirt.'	Poet Laureate.
1845	First Sikh War. Potato disease in Ireland.	Thomas Hood died.	Wordsworth meets Tennyson in London.
1850	Sir Robert Peel died.	W. L. Bowles died. Tennyson's 'In Memoriam.'	Wordsworth dies. Buried in Grasmere Churchyard.



## LORD BYRON (1788—1824)

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1788	Eve of French Revolution. George III. insane.		George Gordon, afterwards Lord Byron, born in London.
1798	Nelson's victory of the Nile. Rebellion of United Irishmen.	Coleridge and Wordsworth publish 'Lyrical Ballads.'	Succeeds to the title on the death of his grand-uncle.
1801	Battles of Alexandria and Copenhagen. Union of Great Britain and Ireland.	Southey's 'Thalaba.'	Byron sent to Harrow.
1805	Battles of Trafalgar and Austerlitz.	Wordsworth's 'Prelude' finished. Scott's 'Lay of the Last Minstrel.'	Byron entered at Trinity College, Cambridge.
1807	Napoleon declares all British ports blockaded. Wilberforce's Bill for Abolition of Slave-trade passed.	Moore's 'Irish Melodies.' Crabbe's 'Parish Register.'	HOURS OF IDLENESS. Sharply criticised by <i>Edinburgh Review</i> (1808).
1809	Moore's victory and death at Corunna.	Campbell's 'Gertrude of Wyoming.' Tennyson and Gladstone born.	ENGLISH BARDS AND SCOTCH REVIEWERS—a retort to the attack on 'Hours of Idleness.' Continental tour to Greece.
1812	War between England and U.S.A. Napoleon's Grand Army destroyed in Russia.	Crabbe's 'Tales in Verse.' Charles Dickens and Robert Browning born.	CHILDE HAROLD (Cantos I. and II.)
1813-15	Fall of Napoleon. Elba. Waterloo.	Scott's 'Lord of the Isles' ('15). Wordsworth's 'Excursion' published ('14).	GIAOUR, BRIDE OF ABYDOS, SIEGE OF CORINTH. Byron the darling of London society. Marries Miss Milbanke ('15).
1816	Bombardment of Algiers by Exmouth.	Shelley's 'Alastor.' Coleridge's 'Christabel.'	His daughter born. His wife deserts him. Byron leaves England never to return. PRISONER OF CHILLON.
1822	Independence of Greece acknowledged.	Shelley drowned off Leghorn.	Residence in Italy. Present at Shelley's funeral pyre.
1823	Criminal Law Reform.	Lamb's 'Essays of Elia.'	Byron went to Greece to help the people against the Turks.
1824	Turks regain possession of Greece.	Landon's 'Imaginary Conversations.'	Dies of fever at Missolonghi.

## THOMAS CARLYLE (1795—1881)

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1795	Cape of Good Hope taken by England. Warren Hastings acquitted.	Keats born. Landor's first poems.	Carlyle born at Ecclefechan, Dumfriesshire. Father a stonemason.
1805	Battles of Trafalgar and Austerlitz.	Scott's 'Lay of the Last Minstrel.' Wordsworth's 'Prelude' finished.	Carlyle at Annan Academy; miserable at school.
1809	Sir A. Wellesley defeats the French at Talavera, and is created Viscount Wellington.	Tennyson, Gladstone, and Darwin born. Byron's 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.' Campbell's 'Gertrude of Wyoming.'	Goes to Edinburgh University. Walked there from Ecclefechan—a hundred miles.
1814	Peace in Europe. Napoleonsent to Elba.	Wordsworth's 'Excursion' published. Scott's 'Waverley.'	Mathematical master at Annan Academy.
1816	Bombardment of Algiers by Exmouth.	Shelley's 'Alastor,' Coleridge's 'Christabel,' Byron's 'Prisoner of Chillon.'	Carlyle master at Kirkcaldy Grammar School. Friendship with Edward Irving.
1818	The allies finally evacuate France.	Last part of 'Childe Harold.' Shelley's 'Revolt of Islam.' Keats's 'Endymion.'	Private teaching and literary hackwork in Edinburgh.
1825	Catholic Emancipation Bill rejected by the Lords. Financial crisis.	T. Huxley born.	Carlyle's first visit to London. LIFE OF SCHILLER.
1826	Turks capture Missolonghi. Intervention of the Great Powers.	Sir Walter Scott goes bankrupt.	Carlyle marries Jane Baillie Welsh.
1828	Duke of Wellington Premier.	<i>Athenaeum</i> and <i>Spectator</i> established.	Resides on Mrs. Carlyle's farm of Craigenputtock. Essays and literary work for magazines.
1834	Abolition of slavery in British Colonies ('33). Houses of Parliament burned.	S. T. Coleridge and Charles Lamb died.	Carlyle removes to London.
1837	Accession of Queen Victoria.	Lockhart's 'Life of Scott' ('36-'38). Browning's 'Strafford.'	Carlyle in Chelsea. FRENCH REVOLUTION.

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1840	Penny Postage established. Queen marries Prince Albert. Opium War with China.	Browning's 'Sordello.'	HEROES AND HERO-WORSHIP—one of a series of lectures delivered to London audiences.
1845	First Sikh War.	Dickens's 'Cricket on the Hearth.' Thomas Hood and Sydney Smith died.	CROMWELL'S LETTERS AND SPEECHES.
1850	Sir Robert Peel died.	Wordsworth died. Thackeray's 'Pendennis' finished. Tennyson appointed Poet Laureate. 'In Memoriam.'	LATTER-DAY PAMPHLETS.
1865	End of American Civil War.	Browning's collected works published. Ruskin's 'Ethics of the Dust.'	HISTORY OF FREDERICK THE GREAT completed.
1866	Austro-Prussian War. Atlantic cable between Britain and America laid.	Ruskin's 'Crown of Wild Olive.'	Carlyle elected Lord Rector of Edinburgh University against Benjamin Disraeli. Mrs. Carlyle died.
1874	Wolseley's expedition to Coomassie.	George Eliot's 'Legend of Jubal.'	Carlyle receives the Prussian Order of Merit for writing the life of Frederick the Great.
1881	War against the Boers in South Africa. The Tsar Alexander and President Garfield (U.S.A.) assassinated.	George Eliot died the year before.	Carlyle dies. Burial in Westminster Abbey offered; but he rests, by his own wish, in Ecclefechan Churchyard.

## ALFRED TENNYSON (1809—1892)

	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1809	Duel of Lord Castle-reagh and Mr. Canning.	Gladstone born. Byron's 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.' Thomas Campbell's 'Gertrude of Wyoming.'	Tennyson born at Somersby, in Lincolnshire, where his father was rector.
1822	George IV.'s visit to Scotland.	Shelley's 'Hellas.' Shelley drowned. Matthew Arnold born. Scott's 'Pirate.'	Tennyson had already written a long epic.
1828	Duke of Wellington Premier.	Scott's 'Fair Maid of Perth.' D. G. Rossetti born.	Tennyson enters Trinity College, Cambridge, with his brother Charles.
1829	Catholic Relief Act.	Scott's 'Anne of Geierstein.'	Gains the University prize-poem on TIM-BUCTOO.
1830	George IV. dies. William IV. accedes. Liverpool and Manchester Railway.	Moore's 'Life of Byron.' Hazlitt died.	First published work—POEMS, CHIEFLY LYRICAL.
1837	Accession of Queen Victoria.	Carlyle's 'French Revolution.' Brown-ing's 'Strafford.'	Poem of ST. AGNES'S EVE.
1842	Peel's first Free Trade Budget.	Dickens's 'American Notes.'	MORTE D'ARTHUR.
1845	First Sikh War. Irish Potato Famine.	Thomas Hood and Sydney Smith died. Carlyle's 'Oliver Cromwell.'	'Decidedly the first of our living poets.'—Wordsworth.
1847	O'Connell died. Irish exodus to U.S.A. begins. Railway speculation mania.	Mrs. Browning's 'Sonnets from the Portuguese.' Thackeray's 'Vanity Fair.' Charlotte Brontë's 'Jane Eyre.'	THE PRINCESS.
1850	Sir Robert Peel died.	Wordsworth died. Carlyle's 'Latter-Day Pamphlets.' Thackeray's 'Pendennis' finished. Browning's 'Christmas Eve' and 'Easter Day.'	IN MEMORIAM. Tennyson appointed Poet Laureate. Marriage.
1852	Wellington died. Napoleon III. declares himself Emperor. Discovery of the North-West Passage by McClure.	Thomas Moore died. Thackeray's 'Esmond.' M. Arnold's 'Empedocles on Etna.' Dickens's 'Bleak House.'	Funeral ODE UPON WELLINGTON. Eldest son, Hallam, born.



	HISTORY	LITERATURE	LIFE
1853	War between Russia and Turkey.	Thackeray's 'The Newcomes.'	Tennyson settles at Freshwater, Isle of Wight; lives there till 1870.
1854	Crimean War. Alma, Inkerman, and Balaklava.	'Poems' by Matthew Arnold ('53). Newman's 'Idea of a University.'	THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE.
1855	Fall of Sebastopol. Tax on newspapers abolished.	Dickens's 'Little Dorrit.'	MAUD.
1859	France and Sardinia declare war against Austria.	De Quincey, Hallam, and Macaulay died. Darwin's 'Origin of Species.' Dickens's 'Tale of Two Cities.' Mill's 'Essay on Liberty.'	First four of the IDYLLS OF THE KING.
1864	American Civil War raging.	Landon died. Newman's 'Apologia.'	ENOCH ARDEN.
1875	Britain acquires, by purchasing shares, the chief hold over the Suez Canal.	M. Arnold's 'God and the Bible.'	QUEEN MARY.
1877	Victoria declared Empress of India. Russo-Turkish War.		HAROLD.
1878	The Berlin Congress.	Jefferies' 'Gamekeeper at Home.'	Ballad of the REVENGE.
1884	Gordon besieged in Khartoum.	Browning's 'Ferishtah's Fancies.'	BECKET. Tennyson made a peer. Completion of the IDYLLS.
1889	Parnell Commission.	Browning's 'Asolando.' Robert Browning died. Wilkie Collins died.	THE FORESTERS.
1892	Irish Local Government Bill. Duke of Clarence died.	Ernest Renan died.	Tennyson dies. Buried in Westminster Abbey.

# INDEX

- Addison, Joseph**, 305: *The Spectator*, 309; *Cato*, 309; an Estimate, 311.
- Adonais*, 464.
- Aelfric**, 6.
- Ainsworth, William Harrison**, 559: his *Novels*, 559.
- Akenside, Mark**, 377.
- Alastor*, 460.
- Alfred, King**, 6: *Literary Works*, 6.
- Alison, Sir Archibald**, 528.
- Allingham, William**, 620.
- Anatomy of Melancholy*, 183.
- Ancient Mariner, Rime of the*, 439.
- Ancren Riele*, 15.
- Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (see *English Chronicle*).
- Apologie for Poetry*, 74, 111.
- Arbuthnot, John**, 297: *History of John Bull*, 297.
- Arcadia*, 74.
- Arnold, Matthew**, 611: *Early Poems*, 612; *Prose Writings and Later Poems*, 613; his *Work*, 614.
- Arnold, Thomas**, 528.
- Ascham, Roger**, 67: *Toxophilus*, 67; *The Scholemaster*, 67.
- Austen, Jane**, 511: her *Work*, 512; her *Style*, 513.
- Aytoun, William Edmonstone**, 619: *Lays of the Cavaliers*, 619.
- Bacon, Francis**, Baron Verulam, 178: his *Philosophy*, 179; *Advancement of Learning*, 180; *The Novum Organum*, 180; *Essays*, 181; *The New Atlantis*, 182.
- Baeda, or Bede**, 6.
- Bale, John**, 89.
- Ballad Poetry**, 40: What a Ballad is, 41; Authors of, 41; Most Famous, 42; Characteristics of, 44; the Robin Hood Cycle, 44; the Refrain, 46; Disappearance of, 46.
- Barbour, John**, 19.
- Barclay, Alexander**, 103: *Shyp of Fools*, 103.
- Bards**, 2.
- Barham, Richard H.**, 619: *The Ingoldsby Legends*, 619.
- Barrow, Isaac**, 228.
- Battle of Brunanburh*, 7.
- Battle of Maldon, Song of the*, 8.
- Baxind*, 485.
- Baxter, Richard**, 221: *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*, 221.
- Beattie, James**, 378.
- Beaumont, Francis, and Fletcher, John**, 146: their *Plays*, 147; their *Lyrics*, 147.
- Beckford, William**, 407: *Vathek*, 407.
- Behn, Aphra**, 263: *Oroonoko*, 264.
- Bentham, Jeremy**, 548.
- Beowulf*, 3.
- Berners, Lord** (John Bouchier), 64: *Translation of Froissart's Chronicle*, 65.
- Berkeley, George**, 314: his *Works*, 314.
- Blackwood's Magazine*, 486.
- Blake, William**, 392: his *Poems*, 393.
- Bolingbroke, Viscount** (Henry St. John), 317.
- Borrow, George**, 553: his *Works*, 553.
- Boswell, James**, 352: *Life of Samuel Johnson*, 352.
- Bourgogne, John de**, 36.
- Bowles, William Lisle**, 480.
- Brontë, Anne**, 519.
- Brontë, Charlotte**, 516.
- Brontë, Emily Jane**, 519.
- Brontë Novels, The*, 518.
- Brooke, Henry**, 343.
- Brooke, Lord** (Sir Fulke Greville), 113.
- Brougham, Henry**, 484.
- Browne, Sir Thomas**, 237: *Religio Medici*, 237; *Hydriotaphia*, 237; *Fulgar Errors*, 238.
- Browne, William**, 168.
- Browning, Elizabeth Barrett**, 607: her *Poems*, 608; her *Work*, 608.
- Browning, Robert**, 598: *Italy and Marriage*, 600; his *Greatest Poem*, 600; his *Work*, his *Ideals of Form and Thought*, his *Message*, 604.
- Brunanburh, Battle of*, 7.
- Brunton, Mary**, 574.
- Brut d'Angleterre*, 12, 13.
- Buckingham, Duke of** (see Villiers, George).
- Bunyan, John**, 220: *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 221.
- Burke, Edmund**, 361: *Early Works*, 361; *Speeches on English Affairs*, 362; *Reflections on the French Republic*, 363; his *Style*, 364.

- Burney, Frances, 507 : her Career, 508 ; her Work, 508.
- Burnet, Gilbert, 318.
- Burnet, Thomas, 318.
- Burns, Robert, 394 : *Early Satires*, 395 ; First Publication, 396 ; *The Cottar's Saturday Night*, 399 ; *The Two Dogs*, 399 ; *The Jolly Beggars*, 400 ; *Hallowe'en*, 400 ; *Tam o' Shanter*, 401 ; his Works, 402 ; his Character, 404.
- Burton, Robert, 183 : *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 183.
- Butler, Samuel, 249 : *Hudibras*, 250.
- Byron, Lord, 408 : *Earliest Verse*, 450 ; Continental Travel, 451 ; *Romantic Poems*, 451 ; his Exile, 452 ; his Dramas, 453 ; *Don Juan*, 453 ; his Work, 454 ; his Character, 457.
- Cædmon, 5.
- Caleb Williams, 489.
- Calverley, Charles Stuart, 620.
- Campbell, Thomas, 476 : *The Picares of Hope*, 477 ; *Gertrude of Wyoming*, 477.
- Campion, Thomas, 167.
- Canning, George, 480.
- Canterbury Tales, *The*, 25.
- Carew, Thomas, 195.
- Carey, Henry F., 492.
- Carleton, William, 561.
- Carlyle, Thomas, 528 : *Earlier Works*, 529 ; *The French Revolution*, 530 ; *Other Works*, 531 ; *Lives of Great Men*, 532 ; his Style and Work, 533 ; his Philosophy, 534.
- Castle of Indolence, 371.
- Caxton, William, 62 : his Works, 62.
- Cenci, *The*, 464.
- Chalmers, Thomas, 546.
- Chapman, George, 155 : his Plays, 155 ; *Translations of Homer*, 166.
- Chatterton, Thomas, 379.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey, 20 : his Career, 20 ; *Re-maunt of the Rose*, 21 ; *The Boke of the Duchesse*, 22 ; *Troilus and Criseyde*, 23 ; *The Parlement of Foules*, 23 ; *The House of Fame*, 24 ; *The Legend of Good Women*, 24 ; *The Canterbury Tales*, 25 ; his Verse, 25 ; his Prose, 39.
- Chesterfield, Earl of (Philip Dormer Stanhope), 366 : *Letters to his Son*, 366.
- Chillingworth, William, 230.
- Christabel, 442.
- Christian Year, 619.
- Christopher North, 487.
- Chroniclers, *The*, 66.
- Church, Richard William, 547.
- Cibber, Colley, 276.
- Clarendon, Earl of, 239 : *History of the Great Rebellion*, 239.
- Cloister and the Hearth, *The*, 583.
- Clough, Arthur Hugh, 610 : his Poems, 610.
- Cobbett, William, 551.
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 436 : *Lyrical Ballads*, 439 ; *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, 439 ; his Work, 441 ; *Christabel and Kubla Khan*, 442 ; *Prose Writings*, 443.
- Colin Clout, 103, 115.
- Collier, Jeremy, 265 : *Short View of the English Stage*, 265, 274.
- Collins, William, 372 : his Odes, 373.
- Collins, William Wilkie, 586 : his Novels, 587. Comedy, *The Origin of*, 83.
- Complete Angler, *The*, 239.
- Confessions of an Opium-Eater, 499.
- Congreve, William, 271 : his Plays, 271.
- Cooper, Anthony Ashley, 317.
- Cooper's Hill, 202.
- Cottar's Saturday Night, *The*, 399.
- Courtly Poets, *The*, 278.
- Cowley, Abraham, 203 : *Davidic and Pindarique Odes*, 204 ; *Essays*, 244.
- Cowper, William, 385 : Religious Influence on, 385 ; *The Task*, 386 ; his Work, 387.
- Crabbe, George, 389 ; his Works, 290.
- Craik, Dinah Maria (see Mulock).
- Crashawe, Richard, 201 : *Steps to the Temple*, 201.
- Crocker, Thomas Crofton, 488.
- Crowne, John, 274.
- Cunningham, Allan, 480.
- Cynewulf, 6.
- Daniel, Samuel, 163.
- Darwin, Charles, 550 : *On the Origin of Species*, 550 ; *The Descent of Man*, 550.
- Darwin, Erasmus, 379.
- D'Avenant, Sir William, 197 ; *Gondibert*, 198 ; his Plays, 261.
- Davidic, 204.
- Davies, Sir John, 165 : *Nosce Teipsum*, 165.
- Davis, Sir John, 75.
- Defoe, Daniel, 319 : his Career, 320 ; *The Shortest Way with Dissenters*, 321 ; *Robinson Crusoe*, 323 ; *Journal of the Plague*, 324.
- Dekker, Thomas, 153 ; his Plays, 154.
- Della Cruscan School, 485.
- Denham, Sir John, 202 : *Cooper's Hill*, 202.
- Descent of Man, The*, 550.
- De Quincy, Thomas, 497 : his Literary Career, 498 ; *Confessions of an Opium-Eater*, 499 ; his Work, 500.
- De Vere, Sir Aubrey Hunt, 481.
- Dichter, 2.
- Dickens, Charles, 565 : Early Successes, 566 ; Literary Career : *Oliver Twist*, 567 ; *Nicholas Nickleby*, 568 ; *The Old Curiosity Shop*, 568 ; *Barnaby Rudge*, 569 ; *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 569 ; *Christmas Books*, 569 ; *Dombey & Son*, 570 ; *David Copperfield*, 570 ; *Magazines established*, 570 ; *Black House*, 571 ; *Hard Times*, 571 ; *Little Dorrit*, 572 ; *A Tale of*

- Two Cities*, 572; *Great Expectations*, 572; *Our Mutual Friend*, 572; *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, 573; an Estimate, 573.  
**Dillon, Wentworth** (Earl of Roscommon), 279.  
**Disraeli, Benjamin**, 564; *Early Novels*, 564; *Trilogy of his Middle Period*, 564; *Last Novels*, 565.  
*Don Juan*, 453.  
**Donne, John**, 174.  
**Dorset, Earl of** (see Sackville, Charles).  
**Douglas, Gawain**, 54; his *Poems*, 54.  
**Drama**, The, 80; *Origin of*, 80.  
**Dramatists**, Pre-Shakspearian, 89.  
*Drapier Letters*, 294.  
**Drayton, Michael**, 163; *Polyolbion*, 164.  
**Drummond, William**, 176; his *Poems*, 176; his *Prose*, 186.  
**Dryden, John**, 243; *Essay of Dramatic Poetry*, 243; *Early Poems*, 252; *Dramas*, 253; *Satires*, 254; *Odes, Translations, and Fables*, 256; *Characteristics*, 258.  
**Dunbar, William**, 51; his *Poems*, 55.  
  
**Earle, John**, 237; *Microcosmography*, 237.  
*Ecclesiastical Polity*, 78.  
**Edgeworth, Maria**, 509; her *Work*, 509; an Estimate, 510.  
*Edinburgh Review*, The, 481.  
*Eliu, The Essays of*, 492.  
**Eliot, George** (see Evans, Mary Ann).  
**Ellis, George**, 486.  
*Endymion*, 468.  
*English Chronicle, The*, 7.  
*Enoch Arden*, 504.  
*Epithalamion*, 122.  
**Etherege, Sir George**, 262.  
*Euphues*, 70, 92.  
**Evans, Mary Ann**, 521; her *Novels*, 522; her *Work*, 523.  
**Evelyn, John**, 245; *Diary*, 245.  
  
**Fabian, Robert**, 66.  
*Fabric Queen*, 119.  
**Fairfax, Edward**, 162.  
**Falconer, William**, 378.  
**Farquhar, George**, 270; his *Plays*, 270.  
*Ferrex and Porrex* (see Gorboduc).  
**Ferrier, Susan**, 514.  
**Fielding, Henry**, 327; his *Plays*, 328; his *Novels*, 329.  
**Fielding, Sarah**, 343.  
*Fight at Finnesburg*, 8.  
**Fletcher, Giles**, 173.  
**Fletcher, John** (see Beaumont, Francis).  
**Fletcher, Phineas**, 172.  
**Ford, John**, 151; his *Plays*, 151.  
**Fox, George**, 224.  
**Foxe, John**, 68; *Book of Martyrs*, 68.  
*Fraser's Magazine*, 488.  
  
**Freeman, Edward Augustus**, 542; *Historical Works*, 542.  
**French Dialects**, The Two, 10.  
*French Revolution*, 530.  
*Freissart's Chronicle*, 65.  
**Fuller, Thomas**, 234; *History of the Worthies of England*, 234.  
  
**Gaimar, Geoffrey**, 12.  
**Galt, John**, 423; his *Novels*, 424.  
*Gammer Gurton's Needle*, 90.  
**Garth, Sir Samuel**, 301.  
**Gascoigne, George**, 108; *The Steele Glas*, 108.  
**Gaskell, Mrs.**, 520; her *Novels*, 522.  
**Gay, John**, 299; his *Works*, 299.  
**Geoffrey of Monmouth**, 12.  
*Gertrude of Wymming*, 477.  
**Gibbon, Edward**, 357; *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 358; his *Style*, 360.  
**Gifford, William**, 485; *The Baviad and Maeviad*, 485.  
*Gleeman's Song* (see Walsyth).  
**Godwin, William**, 488; *An Inquiry concerning Political Justice*, 489; *The Adventures of Caleb Williams*, 489.  
**Goldsmith, Oliver**, 337; his *Travels*, 338; *Life in London*, 339; *The Vicar of Wakefield*, 340; his *Works*, 341.  
**Gondibert**, 198.  
*Gorboduc*, 91, 110.  
**Gower, John**, 30; his *Poems*, 32.  
**Grainger, James**, 379.  
**Gray, Thomas**, 374; his *Poems*, 375.  
**Green, John Richard**, 543; *Historical Works*, 545.  
**Greene, Robert**, 72; *Pandosto*, 72; his *Plays*, 95.  
**Greville, Sir Fulke** (see Lord Brooke).  
**Griffin, Gerald**, 502.  
**Grote, George**, 527.  
*Gulliver's Travels*, 295.  
  
**Hakluyt, Richard**, 75.  
**Hales, John**, 229.  
**Halifax, Marquis of** (see Savile, George).  
**Hall, Edward**, 66.  
**Hallam, Henry**, 540; *Historical Works*, 540.  
**Hamilton, Sir William**, 548.  
**Hawes, Stephen**, 102.  
**Hazlitt, William**, 495; his *Essays*, 495.  
**Hemans, Felicia**, 481.  
**Henry the Minstrel** (Blind Harry), 50; *Wallace*, 50.  
**Henryson, Robert**, 50.  
**Herbert, George**, 192; *The Temple*, 195.  
**Herbert of Cherbury, Lord**, 186; *Autobiography*, 187.  
*Hero and Leander*, 124.  
**Herrick, Robert**, 188; *Hesperides*, 189.



- Heywood, John, 85: *The Four P.P.'s*, 85.  
 Heywood, Thomas, 158: his *Plays*, 158.  
 Higden, Ralph, 38.  
*Histrionastix*, 223.  
 Hobbes, Thomas, 232: *Leviathan*, 232.  
 Hogg, James, 479: *The Queen's Wake*, 479.  
 Holinshed, Raphael, 70.  
*Holy Living and Dying*, 227.  
 Home, John, 394.  
 Hood, Thomas, 588: his *Poems*, 589.  
 Hooker, Richard, 77: *Ecclesiastical Polity*, 78.  
 Hope, Thomas, 425.  
*Hudibras*, 250.  
 Hume, David, 354: *History of England*, 354.  
 Hunt, James Henry Leigh, 496: his *Poems*, 497.  
 Hyde, Edward (see Clarendon, Earl of).  
*Hydriotaphia*, 237.  
*Hyperion*, 470.  
  
*Idylls of the King*, 594.  
*Imaginary Conversations*, 503.  
*Ingoldsby Legends*, 619.  
*In Memoriam*, 593.  
*Interludes*, 85.  
 Irish Novelists, 560.  
  
 James, G. P. R., 426.  
 James I., 48: *The King's Quhair*, 48.  
 James VI., 185: *Basilikon Doron*, 185.  
 Jefferies, John Richard, 555: his *Works*.  
 Jeffrey, Francis, 433.  
 Johnson, Samuel, 344: *Early Difficulties*, 345; his *Dictionary*, 346; *Other Works*, 347; *Visit to Scotland*, 349; *The Lives of the Poets*, 350; his *Style*, 350.  
 Johnston, Charles, 343.  
*Jolly Beggar*, *The*, 400.  
 Jongleurs, 12.  
 Jonson, Ben, 138: his *Plays*, 140; his *Masques*, 142; his *Lyrical Poems*, 142; his *Prose Works*, 144; *Testimonia*, 144.  
  
 Keats, John, 467: *Endymion*, 468; *Romantic Poems*, 469; *Hyperion*, 470; *Shorter Poems*, 470.  
 Keble, John, 619: *The Christian Year*, 619.  
 Kinglake, Alexander William, 543.  
 Kingsley, Charles, 584: his *Novels*, 585; *Historical Works*, 585; *Lyrics*, 586; his *Character*, 586.  
*King's Quhair*, 48.  
 Knolles, Richard, 187: *History of the Turks*, 187.  
*Kubla Khan*, 442.  
 Kyd, Thomas, 97: *The Spanish Tragedy*, 97.  
  
 Lake School, *The*, 427.  
*Lalla Rookh*, 475.  
 Lamb, Charles, 490: his *Literary Career*, 491; *The Essays of Elia*, 492; his *Work*, 493.  
 Landor, Walter Savage, 501: his *Literary Career*, 502; *The Imaginary Conversations*, 503; his *Work*, 505.  
 Langland, William, 16: *Piers the Plowman's Vision*, 17; *Langland's Language*, 18; his *Religion*, 19.  
 Latimer, Hugh, 66.  
 Layamon, 13.  
 Lear, Edward, 619: *The Book of Nonsense*, 619.  
 Lee, Nathaniel, 266: his *Plays*, 266.  
 Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan, 562.  
 Lever, Charles, 560: his *Novels*, 561.  
*Leviathan, The*, 232.  
 Lewis, Matthew Gregory, 407: *The Monk*, 407.  
 Lover, Samuel, 562.  
 Lillo, George, 277: his *Plays*, 278.  
 Literary Club, *The*, 348.  
*Lives of the Poets*, 350.  
 Locke, John, 233: *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 234; *Thoughts on Education*, 234.  
 Lockhart, John Gibson, 487: *Life of Scott*, 488.  
 Lodge, Thomas, 93: *Rosalynde: Euphues' Golden Legacy*, 93.  
*London Lyckpenny*, 33.  
 Lovelace, Richard, 100: *Lucasta*, 209.  
 Lydgate, John, 32: *Fall of Princes*, 32; *London Lyckpenny*, 33.  
 Lyly, John, 70: *Euphues, or the Anatomy of Wit*, 70, 92; his *Plays*, 92.  
 Lyndaay, David, 55: his *Poems*, 56.  
*Lyrical Ballads*, 429, 439.  
 Lytton, Lord, 562: his *Novels*, 562; his *Style*, 563.  
  
 Macaulay, Thomas Babington, 535: *Public Career*, 535; his *History*, 536; *Essays and Poems*, 537; his *Style*, 538.  
 Mackenzie, Henry, 343.  
 Macpherson, James, 382: *Poems of Ossian*, 382.  
*Macciad*, 485.  
 Maginn, William, 488.  
 Mahony, Francis (Father Prout), 488.  
 Maine, Sir Henry James Sumner, 549.  
*Mablon, Song of the Battle of, S.*  
 Malory, Sir Thomas, 13, 60: *Morte d'Arthur*, 60.  
 Mandeville, Bernard, 318.  
 Mandeville, Sir John, 35: his *Travels*, 35.  
 Marlowe, Christopher, 98: his *Plays*, 98; *Hero and Leander*, 124.  
 Marryat, Frederick, 558: his *Novels*, 558.  
 Marston, John, 156: his *Plays*, 156.  
 Martineau, Harriet, 515.  
 Marvell, Andrew, 218.

- Masques, 86.  
 Massinger, Philip, 150 : his *Plays*, 150.  
 Maturin, Charles Robert, 407.  
 Maxwell, William Hamilton, 560.  
 Mayne Reid, 559.  
 Middleton, Thomas, 157 : his *Plays*, 157.  
 Mill, John Stuart, 549 : his *Work*, 349.  
 Miller, Hugh, 552.  
 Milman, Henry Hart, 543.  
 Milton, John, 208 : *Hymn on the Nativity*, 210 ;  
*L'Allegro and Il Penseroso*, 211 ; *Lycidas*  
 and *Comus*, 211 ; *Sonnets*, 213 ; *Areopagitica*,  
 213 ; *Paradise Lost*, 214 ; *Paradise Regained*,  
 215 ; *Samson Agonistes*, 216.  
 Minstrel, 11.  
 Miracle Play, The, 81 : The Four Collections,  
 82 ; Occasion of the Plays, 82.  
 Mirror for Magistrates, 111.  
 Mitford, Mary Russell, 515 : *Our Village*, 515.  
 Mitford, William, 528.  
 Monk, The, 407.  
 Montague, Lady Mary Wortley, 316.  
 Montgomery, James, 481.  
 Montgomery, Robert, 481.  
 Moore, John, 313.  
 Moore, Thomas, 473 : *Irish Melodies*, 473 ;  
*Lalla Rookh*, 475 ; *Biographies*, 475.  
 Moralities, 84.  
 More, Sir Thomas, 63.  
 Morier, James, 425.  
 Morté d'Arthur, 60.  
 Mulock, Dinah Maria, 526.  
  
 Napier, William Francis Patrick, 540 : *History*  
*of the War in the Peninsula*, 541.  
 Nash, Thomas, 96 : his *Works*, 96.  
 Newman, John Henry, 544 : his *Work*, 545 ;  
 his *Style*, 545.  
 Newspapers, First, 305.  
 Noctes Ambrosianæ, 487.  
 Norman-French, effect on English, 10.  
 Normans, The, 9.  
 Norton, Thomas, 91, 110.  
 North, Christopher (see Wilson, John).  
 Novel, The, 319.  
 Novum Organum, 180.  
 Nut-brown Maid, The, 43.  
  
 Occleve, Thomas, 33 : *De Regimine Principum*,  
 33.  
*Origin of Species*, 550.  
 Orm, or Ormin, 14 : *Ormulum*, 14.  
 Otway, Thomas, 264 : *Venice Preserved*, 265.  
 Overbury, Sir Thomas, 182.  
  
 Paley, William, 366.  
 Palgrave, Sir Francis, 528.  
  
 Pandosto, 72.  
 Parnell, Thomas, 302.  
 Peacock, Thomas Love, 557 : his *Novels*, 552.  
 Peele, George, 94 : his *Plays*, 94.  
 Pepys, Samuel, 246 : *Diary*, 247.  
 Percy, Thomas, 406 : *Reliques of Ancient*  
*Poetry*, 406.  
 Peter Plymley's Letters, 484.  
 Phillips, John, 379.  
 Piers Plowman, 17.  
 Pilgrim's Progress, The, 221.  
 Pindarique Odes, 204.  
 Pleasures of Hope, The, 477.  
 Pocock, Reginald, 62.  
 Political Justice, Inquiry concerning, 489.  
 Polyolbion, 164.  
 Pope, Alexander, 280 : *Early Works*, 281 ;  
*The Rape of the Lock*, 282 ; *Translations of*  
*Homer*, 282 ; *The Dunciad*, 284 ; *The Essay*  
*on Man*, 285 ; *Satires, Epistles*, 285 ; his  
 Character and Genius, 287.  
 Porter, Anna Maria and Jane, 425.  
 Princess, The, 593.  
 Prior, Matthew, 298.  
 Procter, Walter Bryan, 481.  
 Prometheus Unbound, 462.  
 Prothalamion, 122.  
 Prout, Father (see Mahony, Francis).  
 Prynne, William, 223 : *Histrionastix*, 223.  
 Purchas, Samuel, 75.  
  
 Quarles, Francis, 192 : *Emblems*, 192.  
 Quarterly Review, The, 434.  
 Queen Mab, 460.  
 Queen's Wake, 479.  
  
 Radcliffe, Anne, 407.  
 Raleigh, Sir Walter, 75 : *Fight of the Revenge*,  
 76 ; *History of the World*, 76.  
 Ralph Roister Doister, 90.  
 Ramsay, Allan, 302.  
 Reade, Charles, 582 : his *Novels of Purpose*,  
 582 ; *The Cloister and the Hearth*, 583.  
 Reeve, Clara, 407.  
 Rehearsal, The, 278.  
 Reid, Thomas Mayne, 559.  
 Rejected Addresses, 481.  
 Religio Medici, 237.  
 Restoration Drama, The, 260.  
 Reviews, The, 481.  
 Revolt of Islam, 461.  
 Reynard the Fox, 12.  
 Rhapsodists, 2.  
 Richardson, Samuel, 325 : his *Novels*, 326.  
 Robertson, William, 356 : his *Histories*, 356.  
 Robin Hood Cycle, 44.  
 Robinson Crusoe, 323.  
 Rochester, Earl of (see Wilmot, John).

Rogers, Samuel, 476 : his *Poems*, 476.  
 Romantic Movement, *The*, 406, 448.  
*Romance of the Rose, The*, 12, 21.  
 Roscommon, Earl of (*see* Dillon, Wentworth).  
 Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, 616 : his *Career*, 616 ;  
 his *Work*, 617.  
 Rowe, Nicholas, 277 : his *Plays*, 277.

Sackville, Charles (Earl of Dorset), 278.  
 Sackville, Thomas (Lord Buckhurst), 91, 110.  
*Saint's Everlasting Rest*, 221.  
 St. John, Henry (*see* Bolingbroke, Viscount).  
 Savile, George (Marquis of Halifax), 242.  
 Scald, 2.  
 Scôp, 2, 11.  
 Scott, Michael, 559.  
 ✓ Scott, Sir Walter, 408 : *First Literary Work*,  
 408 ; *The Border Minstrelsy*, 410 ; *Romantic*  
*Poetry*, 410 ; *Later Poetry*, 411 ; *Waverley*, 413 ;  
 Bankruptcy, 414 ; his *Work*, 415 ; his *Novels*,  
 416 ; *Novels of Norman Feudalism*, 418 ;  
*Novels of Continental Warfare*, 419 ; *The*  
*Tudor Novels*, 419 ; *The Stuart Novels*, 420 ;  
*Last Novels*, 420 ; his *Poetry*, 421.

Scottish Language, *The*, 47.

Seasons, *The*, 371.

Sebastian Brandt, 103.

Sedley, Sir Charles, 263.

Selborne, *Natural History of*, 367.

Selden, John, 184 : *Table Talk*, 185.

*Sentimental Journey*, 235.

Shadwell, Thomas, 274.

Shaftesbury, Earl of (*see* Cooper, Anthony  
 Ashley).

✓ Shakespeare, William, 127 : his *Education*,  
 127 ; his *Marriage*, 128 ; *London in Shake-*  
*peare's Time*, *Earlier Poems*, 129 ; *Appren-*  
*ticeship to the Drama*, 130 ; *The Sonnets*,  
 131 ; *First Period*, 130 ; *Second Period*, 130 ;  
*Third Period*, 132 ; *Fourth Period*, 133 ; his  
*Character*, 133 ; his *Genius*, 134 ; his *Style*,  
 135 ; his *Grammar*, 135 ; his *Versification*,  
 136 ; *Summary*, 137.

Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 458 : *Queen Mab*, 460 ;  
*Alastor*, 460 ; *The Revolt of Islam*, 461 ; *Last*  
*Years in Italy*, 462 ; *Prometheus Unbound*,  
 462 ; *The Cenci*, 464 ; *Odes*, 464 ; *Adonais*,  
 464 ; *Hellas*, 465 ; *Death*, 466 ; an *Estimate*,  
 466.

Shenstone, William, 172.

Sheridan, Richard Brinsley, 368 : his *Plays*,  
 368.

Shirley, James, 159 : his *Plays*, 160.

*Shortest Way with Dissenters, The*, 321.

*Shop of Fools*, 103.

Sidney, Sir Philip, 73 : *Arcadia*, 74 ; *Apology*  
*for Poetry*, 74, 111.

*Silva Scintillans*, 205.

Skelton, John, 103 : his *Work*, 103.

Smith, Adam, 365 ; *Wealth of Nations*, 365.

Smith, Horace, 481.

Smith, James, 481.

Smith, Sidney, 483 : *Peter Plymley's Letters*,  
 484.

Smollett, Tobias, 331 : his *Novels*, 332.

Somerville, William, 379.

South, Robert, 231.

Southerne, Thomas, 275.

Southey, Robert, 444 : *Longer Poems*, 445 ;  
*Prose Writings*, 446 ; his *Work*, 446.

*Spanish Tragedy, The*, 97.

*Spectator, The*, 309.

Speed, John, 69.

Spenser, Edmund, 114 : his *Career*, 115 ; his  
*Work*, 118 ; *The Faerie Queene*, 119 ; *Pro-*  
*thalamion and Epithalamion*, 122.

Stanhope, Philip Dormer (*see* Chesterfield,  
 Earl of).

Stanley, Arthur Penrhyn, 547.

*Steele Glas, The*, 108.

Steele, Richard, 307 : *The Tatler*, 308 ; *The*  
*Spectator*, 309 ; *Further Miscellanies*, 310 ;  
 an *Estimate*, 311.

Sterne, Laurence, 333 : *Life and Opinions of*  
*Tristram Shandy*, 334 ; *A Sentimental*  
*Journey*, 335.

Stow, John, 69.

Suckling, Sir John, 198.

Surrey, Earl of, 106 : *Translation of the*  
*Acæid*, 106.

Swift, Jonathan, 289 : *Life at Moor Park*,  
 289 ; *The Tale of a Tub*, 290 ; *Journal to*  
*Stella*, 291 ; *Change of Politics*, 293 ; *The*  
*Drapier Letters*, 294 ; *Gulliver's Travels*,  
 295 ; his *Last Years*, 296.

*Table Talk*, 185.

*Tale of a Tub*, 290.

*Tam o' Shanter*, 401.

Tannahill, Robert, 481.

*Task, The*, 386.

*Tatler, The*, 308.

Taylor, Sir Henry, 619.

Taylor, Jeremy, 226 : *The Liberty of Prophecy-*  
*ing*, 227 ; *Holy Living and Dying*, 227.

*Temple, The*, 493.

Temple, Sir William, 241 : *Essays*, 241 ; 290.

Tennyson, Alfred, 590 : *Early Period*, 591 ;  
*Longer Poems* : *The Poëticus*, 593 ; *In*  
*Memoriam*, 593 ; *Maud*, 593 ; *The Idylls*,  
 594 ; *Enoch Arden*, 594 ; *Ballads and Dramas*,  
 595 ; his *English and Versification*, 595 ;  
*Summary*, 597.

✓ Thackeray, William Makepeace, 575 : *Early*  
*Literary Career*, 575 ; *The Memoirs of Barry*  
*London*, 576 ; *Vanities Fair*, 576 ; *Pendennis*,  
 577 ; *Edmond*, 578 ; *The Virginians*, 579 ;  
*The Newcomes*, 579 ; *Lectures, The English*

- Humorists and The Four Georges*, 580 ;  
*Cornhill Magazine*, edited, 580 ; an Estimate,  
 580.
- Theatre, the Establishment of, 87 ; the Locus  
 of, 87 ; the First, 88 ; the Globe, 88.
- Thirlwall, Connop, 527.
- Thomson, James, 371 : *The Seasons*, 371 ; *The  
 Castle of Indolence*, 371.
- Tickell, Thomas, 302.
- Tillotson, John, 230.
- Tottel's Miscellany, 108.
- Tourneur, Cyril, 159 : his *Plays*, 159.
- Toxophilus, 67.
- Travellers, The, 75.
- Trevisa, John de, 38 ; *Polychronicon*, 38.
- Tristram Shandy, 334.
- Trollope, Anthony, 583 ; his *Novels*, 584.
- Trollope, Frances, 514.
- Tronbadour, 2, 11.
- Trouvère, 2, 11.
- Two Dogs, The*, 399.
- Udall, Nicholas, 90.
- University Wits, The, 92.
- Vanbrugh, Sir John, 269 : his *Plays*, 269.  
*Vathek*, 407.
- Vaughan, Henry, 206 : *Silex Scintillans*, 207.  
*Vicar of Wakefield*, 310.
- Villiers, George (Duke of Buckingham), 278 :  
*The Rehearsal*, 278.
- Wace, Robert, 12.
- Waller, Edmund, 196.
- Walpole, Horace, 406.
- Walton, Isaac, 238 : *The Complete Angler*, 239.
- Warton, Thomas, 366 : *History of English  
 Poetry*, 367.
- Webster, John, 152 : his *Plays*, 152.
- Whately, Richard, 546.
- Whewell, William, 548.
- White, Gilbert, 367 : *Natural History of Sci-  
 borne*, 367.
- Wilsaith, 1.
- Wilmot, John (Earl of Rochester), 278.
- Wilson, John, 487 : *Noctes Ambrosianae*, 487.
- Wither, George, 170 : his *Work*, 170.
- Wolfe, Charles, 481.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary, 489.
- Wordsworth, William, 427 : *Life at Grasmere*,  
 428 ; *Lyrical Ballads*, 429 ; his *Work*, 431 ;  
 Wordsworth as a Religious Teacher, 434.
- Wulfstan, 6.
- Wyatt, Sir Thomas, 105.
- Wycherley, William, 267 : his *Plays*, 267.
- Wyclif, John, 37 : his *Writings*, 38.
- Young, Edward, 300 : *Night Thoughts*, 300.



